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Scourge of drug traffickers to hunt illegal recruiters

By Juliet Labog-Javellana

A HUNTER of drug lords who ran up a reputation as a ruthless law enforcer will now hunt down illegal recruiters.

President Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday announced the creation of the Presidential Task Force Against Illegal Recruitment and named

FULL STORY A2

First Filipina wins Juilliard's full scholarship for dance

By Nina Terrazo
Correspondent

THIS is another story of the Filipina that could.

Dance, that is, and all the way to a scholarship to the prestigious Juilliard School in New York.

Kendra Hanson, 17, and a graduate of the

FULL STORY A2

NAB as illegal recruiters for the promotion of workers seeking greener pastures abroad is the theme of President Arroyo's speech during the Overseas Employment Summit on Friday.

Gov't pleads: Spare life of Pinoy hostage

Kidnappers' deadline lapses at 2 a.m. Sunday

By Juliet Labog-Javellana

THE GOVERNMENT yesterday appealed for the life of the Filipino hold hostage in Iraq citing the Philippines' "long history of working with the people of Iraq," and how Filipinos "in the tens of thousands" had helped that country "build its roads, bridges and other infrastructure."

President Macapagal-Arroyo's spokesperson Ignacio Bunye said the appeal, issued by Foreign Secretary Delia Albert, was made at the end of a three-hour meeting of the Cabinet Oversight Committee on Internal Security (Cocis) in Malacañang, which Ms. Arroyo called to deal with the abduction of truck driver Angelo de la Cruz by Iraqi militants.

It was the second meeting of the Cocis in as many days since the hostage crisis started.

In her appeal, Albert also said that Ms. la Cruz was part of this tradition of assistance.

"He neither nothing more than an honest day's wage to feed his wife and eight young children. He has not committed any acts of violence against the Iraqi people, nor does he with them ill," Albert said of De la Cruz.

She added, "His life should be spared and he should be allowed to be reunited with his family in the Philippines.

"His death will not achieve any useful purpose. If those who hold him hope to promote their cause, compassion and mercy should be their guiding principle."

Earlier in the day the President announced that Ambassador Roy Cimatu was under orders to secure the release of De la Cruz, whom his captors had threatened to behead if the Philippines did not pull out its troops in 72 hours.

The deadline lapses at 2 a.m.

FULL STORY A2

THE THREE youngest of the eight children of Angelo de la Cruz—Jerrah, 7, Jerome Paul Jeffrey, 4 hold captions of their father done to the heart in their ministry in Barangay Bambakal, Meisic, Pampanga.

BEING HOME the troops to bring home Angelo de la Cruz is the whole point of this rally organized by militant groups along Roxas Bl., Manila.

Pain and hope now dwell in Angelo's hut

By Tonette Orejas
PDI Central Luzon Desk

MEXICO, Pampanga—Emotion is running high in the ramshackle home of Angelo de la Cruz in Barangay Bambakal.

Yellow ribbons are stranded on barbecued bamboosh and on empty milk cans are tacked on the facade of the house, pleading for the safety of the 47-year-old captive and for President Macapagal-Arroyo to heed the family's pleas.

"Kahapon pa ako kay Angelo," the messages read. "Kami po ay nanininiwalaga kay GMA, sana po ay pansinin ang pamamagitan namin."

Angelo's eight children, other family members and neighbors yesterday began a vigil for his safe release from his Iraqi captors.

As Bambakal's villagers expressed fears for Angelo's fate and the uncertain future of his children, four of whom are still in school, the Philippine government appeared here on dealing with the situation quietly.

On Thursday night, according to relatives of the De La Cruzes, officials of the Department of Foreign Affairs and the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration arrived to offer condolences to wife, Arsenia, in Manila. Angelo's father, Feliciano de la Cruz, went with her.

"She received these assurances not to talk

FULL STORY A2

Backers call moratorium on Cha-cha

By Carlito Pablo

HOUSE legislators pushing constitutional change have offered to hold off for 100 days their plans and strategies in pursuit of their pet project while they tackle their day jobs.

They will pass crucial legislation needed to deal with a looming fiscal and debt crisis provided they get what they want—a pacified effort to promote Charter change, by postponing a shift in a parliamentary system.

Speaker Jose de Venecia said yesterday he will propose this quid pro quo to President Macapagal-Arroyo who must deal with a serious financial crisis and needs key economic measures passed by a Congress that seems to be focused on a Charter change agenda.

De Venecia said the Senate and

FULL STORY A2

DOH: Give condoms a chance

By Tarra V. Quismundo

CONDOM nation with 2,500...

Two years ago, the Philippines ranked as the 12th largest population in the world.

"There are now 84 million Filipinos," oversaid

FULL STORY A2

GMA's student named agri secretary

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr. and Yuri Cuttonaro

A FORMER student of hers was President Macapagal-Arroyo's choice as new agriculture secretary.

A lawyer and a management and economics graduate, Arthur Yap has been designated to replace Luis Lorenzo as the helm of the agriculture department.

Before his agriculture post, Lorenzo was designated by Ms Arroyo chair of the Land Bank of the Philippines and the Pinatubo Rural Credit Guarantee Corp.

Yap was the third new appointee in the Cabinet, after the senior Secretary Angelo Reyes and Vice President and incoming Social Welfare Secretary Soc Ji de Castro.

Yap was a student of Ms Ar-

FULL STORY A2

CBCP holds assembly to probe poll fraud

CEBU CITY—The credibility of President Macapagal-Arroyo's victory in May's presidential election may soon face a challenge from an unexpected source—the Roman Catholic Church leaders who stoke her avidly courted.

The influential Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) will hold a special three-day plenary assembly starting today to analyze opposition charges that Ms Arroyo won her fresh six-

FULL STORY A2

A2
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
SATURDAY, JULY 19, 2008

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Northern Luzon including Cordillera and Ilocos region as well as Isabela province will experience cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and thunderstorms. The rest of the country will be partly cloudy with isolated rainshowers and thunderstorms mostly in the afternoon or evening.

Second FRONTPAGE

Lakas, Kampi agree to merge

By Carlos Pedro and TJ Burgonio

THE RULING Lakas-Christian Muslim Democrats party chaired by President Macapagal-Arroyo and the newly-revived Kabalikat ng Malayang Pilipino, a political party she launched when she was the vice-presidency have agreed to merge, Speaker Jose de Venecia Jr. announced yesterday.

De Venecia said the unified party with the Lakas-CMD as the surviving party, will be launched on July 25, the eve of the Arroyo's state-of-the-nation address before the joint session of Congress.

The decision to merge Lakas-CMD and Kampi was formalized Thursday evening in Malacañang where President Arroyo met with national and regional leaders of the two parties.

"In the speech of President Arroyo that night and every speech, we agreed that we will now complete the merger of Lakas-CMD and Kampi," De Venecia said.

De Venecia said that Kampi president and secretary Rep. Ronaldo Puno concepcion will become one of Lakas' deputy secretary generals. Puno served as local government secretary during the Ramos administration.

Kampi leaders said the Senators, who, unlike the Lakas members in Makati City or Mandaluyong, are not up for election in 2010, will run local and regional leaders of the unified party.

De Venecia said that Kampi president Jose Salvador Enrile, Sibagat said Aide Lapiz (PRP), Bicol's as chairs of the committees on appropriations, and ways and means, respectively.

But Puno stressed that the agreement of a merger does not imply even if three proposed coalitions and Lapaz were executed.

"If that wasn't our nomination, the merger will push through. We can agree to disagree. Let's just put everything in a row," he said.

During the meeting on Wednesday, De Venecia agreed to scrap a selection panel that would recommend assignments for legislators after Kampi raised concerns about the "opaquity in the selection process," according to Puno.

The Speaker also agreed to meet with senior leaders of Kampi to discuss any issue of disagreement or misunderstanding.

Tracing roots

In a press conference, De Venecia explained that the Lakas-Kampi merger traces its roots to the 1998 election to refuse he was by his late wife president.

"In 1998, we agreed at that time that her party be merged with Lakas," said De Venecia. "Because I lost in 1998, that merger was not effected."

De Venecia said that he and President Arroyo agreed to build Lakas-CMD "so much stronger as the UMNO party of Mahathir that has "molded Malaysia to build its own economic miracle."

"Our task as the President pointed out to her is to strengthen and modernize Lakas-CMD so we can build it into a disciplined, cohesive and united party," De Venecia said.

Lakas leaders earlier extended the high profile presence of Kampi and its leaders, particularly Puno.

Kampi stalwart Rep. Victor Sumulong (Antipolo City) said Thursday that they were outgunned by 186 Arroyo in Malacañang but Mindanao because they agreed to be working for the benefit of the people.

Kampi is supporting De Venecia's bid bid to retain the speakership.

The 72-member Kampi led by Puno said yesterday it was for the reelection of Speaker De Venecia as the battle for speakership.

Rep. Ronaldo Zamora (San Juan), among others, is also eyeing the speakership.

"Definitely, from Day One, we are fully supporting him. All my votes will go to be Speaker. There's no question about that," Puno told reporters in Quezon City.

He admitted that some Kampi members who belong in different parties had earlier shown reservations about supporting De Venecia, but eventually agreed with the majority decision.

"After lengthy discussions, we decided to give a solid vote for the Speaker to effect the continuity of the Speaker of the House," Puno, secretary of Presidential Assists in the list disclosure, told reporters at the Hotel Sofitel Philippine Plaza.

The newly-restructured Kampi council encompasses members like Arroyo's brother-in-law Rep. Igacio Arroyo (Lacuna).

CAPT. Catherine Mesta B. Castillo, 34, (left) becomes first woman captain to fly a commercial jet aircraft in Philippine aviation history. Together with co-pilot First Officer Mayra C. Florencio as a Cebu Pacific plane, she prepares to take off for Caticlan Friday. The last also named her Cebu Pacific the distinction of being the first technical aviation history to appoint a woman captain for a commercial jet aircraft. Castillo is also a certified kickboxer in taekwondo and was a member of the Philippine taekwondo team. Aside from taekwondo, Castillo also excels in bowling, golf and basketball. She was a member of the Philippine Junior National Bowling Team and the Philippine Youth Basketball Team.

1st Filipina jet captain flies high

CAPT. Catherine Mesta Bresolet A. Castillo yesterday became the first woman captain to fly a commercial jet aircraft in Philippine aviation history.

Castillo, 34, assisted by First Officer Mayra C. Florencio, piloted a Cebu Pacific airline flight from Manila to Cebu on her maiden flight yesterday.

The feat also earned for Cebu Pacific the distinction of being the first local aviation history to appoint a woman captain for a commercial jet aircraft.

Bong Kleyer, CEB General Manager, said Cebu Pacific is an equal opportunity company and is committed to expanding prospects for women pilots as they can take full advantage of employment opportunities in the aviation industry.

"The appointment of Capt. Castillo is reflective of Cebu Pacific's corporate culture, which puts strong emphasis on abilities and professionalism," Kleyer said.

Cebu Pacific, a unit of JG Summit Holdings, Inc. that is Unilaterals designations for Manila and Cebu, is also flying Hong Kong, Seoul, Xiamen and Cancun.

Before joining Cebu Pacific, Castillo had worked as a flight officer for other commercial airlines, including as First Officer and Training Captain of a DC-9 for Cebu Pacific and Second Officer of a B747-400 for Philippine Airlines.

In the other hand, First Officer Florencio has logged a total of 2,990 flying hours.

Castillo completed her BS in Bachelor of Science in Business Administration major in Marketing at the University of the Philippines in 1991.

In 1992, she underwent training to begin flying at the Philippine Airlines Aviation School under a scholarship program. She completed her training in 1993 after logging a total of 307 flying hours.

Castillo is also a certified kickboxer in taekwondo and was a member of Philippine taekwondo team.

Aside from taekwondo, Castillo also excels in bowling and basketball. She was a member of the Philippine Junior National Bowling Team and the Philippine Youth Basketball Team. She is also a member of the Philippine Women's Basketball Team.

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SC ruling renders Maynilad-MWSS deal 'moot,' says finance secretary

By Philip C. Tubeza

THE CONTROVERSIAL compromise agreement forged between Maynilad Water Services and Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System in turn since after the Supreme Court ruled that MWSS could withdraw Maynilad's P1.20 million performance bond, Finance Secretary Jaime Ongpin said yesterday.

Ongpin said that Maynilad would have to undergo rehabilitation under a different scheme since the compromise agreement with MWSS, known as Amendment 2 to Maynilad's concession agreement, had been effectively nulled by the SC ruling last month.

"Amendment 2 no longer exists. Made no sense. That is incorrect," he said.

Ongpin said the government is now preparing to withdraw the water performance bond and not P60 million as agreed upon under Amendment 2.

"There is an SC ruling and it should be followed. We are now preparing the document to be able to execute the SC decision," he said.

But government officials will have to act fast since the performance bond is scheduled to expire on July 31 after Maynilad failed to renew it last month.

Maynilad and the MWSS reached the compromise agreement only this year to avert Maynilad's collapse and ensure the continued water services for Maynilad's customers.

The agreement was approved by the Quezon City Regional Trial Court which is hearing Maynilad's rehabilitation petition.

The agreement would have paved the way for a government takeover of Maynilad, a joint venture of the influential Lopez family's Benpres Holdings and the Ayala-led Filipino group, now known as Globe Dfg.

Under the deal, MWSS through the Development Bank of the Philippines will issue free notes to Maynilad's seven-year bond while local banks will have two notes. Bank creditors can bond notes.

MWSS will own 58 percent of Maynilad while Bank will get 19 percent, Metrobank, five percent and Maynilad employees, four percent.

The debt also stipulates that more than 30 billion in outstanding concession fees that Maynilad owes the government would be converted into the government's bond while the balance would come from Benpres and Bank's 96 billion-worth equity in the water firm.

The two groups agreed to write off almost 96 billion, consisting of their existing equity of P5.21 billion and P757 million of the P1.92 billion in loans that they extended to Maynilad, to eliminate the company's capital deficit.

While Maynilad would still have at least P150 billion in debts, it would be able to get by with out of the financial woes.

Split twins need help again

By Jocelyn Napallacan
PNC Visayas Bureau

CEBU CITY—They returned to a welcome fit for princesses but the Mauco twins have to home to speak of.

Carine and Armand Mauco, the parents of Princess Mae and Princess Ann, the conjoined twins who were successfully separated in Israel further, are appealing to assistance for finances their daughters can have continued home.

The family is living station from the land on which they had built their house and occupied before the twins to Barangay Opao, Mandaue City.

The last one recently sold to lawyer Augustus Go, the owner of the Chronicle in Cebu.

Go has emphasized that he cannot provide for the family's relocation. He has invested offered a scholarship at his university for the Mauco twins—from kindergarten to a college—which he noted was better than on-the-job offered by the SMA Computer College.

"I encourage to the Mauco family of two mother for their twin to finish kindergarten to college and I think one offers a better because my school is located in Mandaue City where they live," Go told the business yesterday.

But Carine said that while she was happy to accept Go's offer, she was worried about the financial support for her daughters' education.

She said the couple cannot afford to build a new house in her husband's P1,200-a-week income from working as a crane as a loading company at the Mactan Export Processing Zone was barely enough for the upkeep of the twins and their other daughters, Michelle, 12, and 6.

With a report from Jelyca Balcombe, PNC Visayas Bureau

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E-mail us at metro@inquirer.com.ph
Deb Libon Cenon B. Rita, Xave G. Dipasupil

Panlilio scion in double murder case still free

By Lolit B. Salaverria

TARLAC does not dampen a mother's search for justice.

Expressing destiny at the failure of authorities to arrest the killers of her husband and her son a year ago, Carmencita de Guzon publicly appealed to law enforcement agencies yesterday for the immediate arrest of alleged killer Jose Mesa Jr. Panlilio.

De Guzon said Panlilio, one of her erstwhile jeweller Fr. S. Panlilio, had been tagged by witnesses as the person who shot to death her sons Jose Angel and Albert Guzon on in Colorina, Capas, on July 15, 2003.

Panlilio, 54, whose last known address was 1466 Buenavilla Avenue, Dasmariñas Village, in Makati City, also reportedly killed the victims' wife's own half brothers, at PESO000.

"Why have they not arrested the suspect in my sons' murder? One year has passed and nothing has happened," De Guzon told members of media in Manila.

Documents provided by De Guzon, a lawyer who is handling the murder cases of her sons, by two children, showed that Panlilio has been named by the Philippine National Police as one of the country's 20 most wanted men with a P1 million reward for his capture.

Gun records showed that on July 15, 2003, Seal who was then 28, and Guzon, then 31, met with Panlilio after the latter offered to sell them his Gas Station site which he had painted to a friend for P200,000.

The three ordered a Mitsubishi Pajero (CBT 191) with equipment to redeem the house that Panlilio had the brothers to Polaris Real Subdivision in Barangay Mabiling, Laguna, where he allegedly killed the two men.

Schwerz said the PLDT had agreed to restructure the city's obligations to the next three years after negotiations with the private company.

The new interior said he would also meet with Meralco officials next week.

Expensive calls

Malonzo said the bills had ballooned because some city hall employees had used the phones for personal long distance calls.

He said he had asked the PLDT to remove the long distance access capability of the phone lines, but claimed that the company "forgot" his request.

Malonzo said he had installed air conditioners in all the offices as city hall, which contributed to the huge electricity bills.

Schwerz said he had written to Local Water to "familiarize" him asking their cooperation in paying taxes in rates arrears.

"We will survive, Malolos is going to go to earth (I trust myself a lot)," he added.

Malonzo and Schwerz said to be allies.

Schwerz once served as Malonzo's secretary and ran as congressman under Malonzo's party in 2001.

In the May elections, Schwerz defeated Malonzo's wife Gigi for the mayor's post.

Why all the fuss about legalizing jueteng?

ON TARGET

Ramon Tulfo

THE PROPOSAL of newly designated Interior and Local Government Secretary Angelo Reyes to legalize jueteng has drawn the least anti-gambling advocates, particularly the Catholic Church.

The Church says legalizing the illegal numbers game would lead to the destruction of our moral fiber since gambling is immoral.

Oh, yeah? Was the moral fiber of the populace destroyed when gambling casinos were legalized, when horse-racing, cockfighting and sweepstakes became legal?

What's one more form of gambling joining the other already legalized forms?

Illegal activity and raffles held by many Catholic parishes throughout the country are other forms of gambling that are not legal. But why are raffles and bingo games allowed? Authorities don't look the other way because these are supposedly held for charity.

In fact, in some parishes, where jueteng is rampant, parish priests go to jueteng financiers for donations for the construction of a new church, or repair of a new chapel, or other charity drives.

This is not a brief for jueteng, which has been there for decades. This is only to say the government cannot eliminate what has been there for generations, because even local and police officials have failed in stamping out the illegal numbers game.

There's a saying that "if you can't beat them, join them." Since jueteng can't be killed, why not legalize it to solve the problem?

It might yet be one of the solutions to the government's lack of funds. It's a multi-billion peso industry employing tens of thousands of people as collectors and cabo (supervisors).

Right now, jueteng lines the pockets of corrupt officials and police officers through a system called "tong/ilonsiya." The term is derived from a reference to police or military intelligence funds, some of which are given to avid fans who help in maintaining the peace and "intelligence" kept to keep from those in power.

If jueteng benefits legal, the "tong/ilonsiya" goes to the government and not to corrupt officials. We are talking here of billions of pesos annually.

Who are against the legalization of jueteng? Officials who take in money from the "tong/ilonsiya."

* * *

The Office of the Ombudsman has dismissed a lawyer-accountant at the Bureau of Internal Revenue for not being able to explain where he got P20.9 million in his 22 years with the bureau.

Ariel Bernardo joined the BIR in 1979 at age 21. The "unyoung, yet so corrupt" BIR official's salary from 1979 to 2003, amounted to P2,848,840. Where did he get the P20.9 million?

Bernardo is now the only one in the BIR who can't explain his sudden wealth. Most of his colleagues don't also explain how they got their mansions, luxury cars, and fat bank accounts.

In short, Ombudsman Simeon Marcelo should not single out Bernardo because there are many more like him in the BIR.

Bob says: Simeon Marcelo who has dealt with a BIR examiner investigating him on dubious tax payments. The business man will tell you—off the record, of course—that he had cooperated with the examiner to no end. The examiner was merely waiting for the BIR man's pockets than to the business.

SALAMONG ACT

The Bayanihan on Roxas Boulevard stirs as all kinds of people, including two women trying to improve their posture by balancing bottles of mineral water on their heads.

2 families fight over life of man in coma

By Luige del Puerto

WHO decides whether life support for a man in a coma should be be removed? His wife? His children? Or his second wife?

Agnes Esquivel, 43, Omaggio her two minor children, is asking the Pasig City Regional Trial Court to stop any moves to remove her partner Manuel Abad, 57, from a life support machine.

Abad, a former vice president of the SMA Educational System, suffered a respiratory attack on June 14 and has been breathing through a respirator at the New Medical City in Pasig City.

Esquivel, who told the lawyers that she and Abad had been together for 20 years, said there were moves by Abad's first family to remove him from life support if his chances of survival became grim.

"I found out about this on June 18," she told the lawyers.

She then sought a temporary restraining order (TRO) on behalf of their two children, aged 9 and 17, blocking any such move.

But Dr. Alfred Ruaterra, a collaborator at the New Medical City, said he had not heard or received instructions from anyone to take blood all the life support system.

"Besides, we generally do not do that," he added, explaining that it could only be removed on the advice of a patient continued to be in a vegetative state for a "prolonged period," usually months.

Last month, Judge Amelia C. Manahan granted a TRO against removing Abad out of the intensive care unit of the hospital, and removing his life support system.

Esquivel now wants an injunction to make the ban permanent.

Raymart not a robber

ROBBERY charges against actor Raymart Santiago have been dropped by the Quezon City Prosecutor's Office for lack of evidence.

Frederick Lazaro said alleged that Santiago took his driver's license and P 1,000 after his truck hit Santiago's van at the intersection of Miriam College and Katipunan Avenue in Loyola Heights, Quezon City last year.

The truck driver claimed the actor also punched him.

Tina Santos

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Custodian faces contempt rap

By Tina Santos

FOR his failure or being to court four suspects in the recent bombing attacks on government offices for a subsidized arrangement, the interpers' custodian is now facing a contempt charge.

Eastern City Judge Maria Theresa Yuchico has asked Director Jesus Calderon, of the Philippine National Police Criminal Investigation and Detection Group, to explain why he should not be cited for contempt.

Former Sen. Roberto Concepcion, Baron Penguin Fuentes, Antonio Mercader and Benjamin Lemuran Jr. were scheduled for arraignment on Thursday for rebellion charges filed against them by the Department of Justice.

Of the four accused, only Fuentes was present in court for the CHO.

The arraignment has been reset on July 14.

Tanong ng Bayan
Sino ang bagay sa DSWD, si Dindy o si Noli?
Congrats to last week's "Tanong ng Bayan" winners!
Ariel D. Adia of Pio Duran town, Albay
"Nagpapasalamat kami sa aking mahal na ina ng dumayo pa sa amin ng napakalayo para lamang sa amin ay ako ay maging maligaya."

"Buti na lang SSS member ako"

kang pasaway ni: G. Iorg F. Umpad
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Low key military tactician named AFP's No. 2 man

By Alexis Pape

A LOW-KEY military tactician with a flair for mathematics is now the second highest ranking officer of the armed forces of the Philippines.

Malacañang yesterday named AFP deputy chief of staff Vice Admiral Antonio Zoilo Reyes as the new AFP vice chief of staff, replacing Lt. Gen. Rodolfo Garcia who retired on Wednesday.

Zoilo Reyes, a member of the controversial Philippine Military Academy Class of 1971, was formerly vice commander of the Philippine Navy. He also served as the AFP's deputy chief of staff for plans and programs (J5) and Chief of the Naval Staff.

He once commanded the Naval Task Force 61 based in Zamboanga City. He was also deputy commander of the Naval Forces West from 1998 to 2000.

He wrote and co-wrote the two-volume "lessons learned from AFP Operations Against the Communist Party of the Philippines/New People's Army" a standard text in the AFP's anti-insurgency campaign. Zoilo Reyes also co-authored a manual for the Navy titled "Typhoon Doctrine for Mariners."

A native of Balasan, Ilo Ilo Reyes graduated valedictorian from the Caraga Elementary School. He working class family settled first in the Tatalon High School in Tondo, Manila, which he graduated valedictorian.

Zoilo Reyes took up BS Mathematics at the University of the Philippines but after one year decided to join the Philippine Military Academy.

He graduated second among 186 graduates of the class and first in the Scientific

4 Abu tipsters get P1.6-M reward

ZAMBOANGA CITY—Four tipsters from Sulu and Basilan provinces yesterday received over P1.6 million prizes from the government for giving information that led to the arrest of at least four Abu Sayyaf members.

Col. Pedro Bonoan, chief of staff of the military's Southern Command, said the reward money came from the Office of the President.

The tipsters were honored and their photographs were taken before they left for their respective provinces.

Bonoan, Southern Command spokesman, said the government has released P11.35 million in rewards since the reward system against leaders and members of the Moro extremist group was set in place in 1992.

He said the amount did not include the reward money from the United States government.

He said the prospects of earning a substantial amount of money have also enticed relatives of Abu Sayyaf members to cooperate with the military. —Julie L. Alipala, PID Mindanao Bureau

Correction

IN THE story "Broke man worries Code 9800 members," in Page A4 of the July 9 issue, Mendozaland was erroneously identified as a sponsoring bank. It was another bank. Space restrictions also gave some readers the impression that Mendoza Perazzo, Code 9800-rated member, was one of the Code 9800-members who were fearful that outgoing Social Welfare Secretary Corazon Soliman's resignation was tied to the Bicam Bonds. The deleted portion quoted Perazzo as saying that the "fears of many 9800s are baseless" because "Broke Gal not get any settlement to Code 9800 when they resigned."

Readers may send their suggestions or comments or bouquets or brickbats in writing or faxes, c/o the editor, *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, PDI Building, Chino Roces Avenue corner Makapilis Street, Makati City, fax No. 897-4783 to 94, e-mail addresses pinoy@inquirer.com.ph and bayani@inquirer.com.ph.

Complaints about Ask Attorney or objections may be sent to Atty. Roberto Reyes, readers' advocate, the same address and fax numbers as those of the ed. editor, and e-mail address rpadaman@inquirer.com.ph.

FOR SOMEONE WITH HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE,
HEART ATTACK, STROKE AND EVEN SUDDEN DEATH
ARE REAL THREATS IN THE EARLY MORNING HOURS.[1]

Studies show that there is an increased risk of cardiovascular complications during the early morning hours in hypertensive patients due to sudden BP increase.[1]

A consistent 24-hour BP control with an effective antihypertensive drug is necessary to protect the hypertensive patient during these risky morning hours.[1]

For the management and control of hypertension, consult your doctor.

A public service announcement from
Boehringer Ingelheim

1st Filipina wins Juilliard scholarship for dance

THE FILIPINA that could dance all the way to the prestigious Juilliard School of Dance on a scholarship, Kendra Saunders, shows why. (Right) Producer-stars Lorna Angeles, Kendra's grandniece Bianca Fernandez and Lorna Sue Pedro, National Artists for Painting and Music, respectively.

Philippine High School for the Arts, is the first Filipina given a full scholarship to the Juilliard School of Dance, said Jeanjoline Guillen, Dance department head of the Cultural Center of the Philippines.

Bonifacio, a native of Mt. town Angeles, Pinat, is a grandniece of Botong Francisco and Lucio San Pedro, National Artists for Painting and Music, respectively.

At first, she couldn't believe the good news. It was after all, April Fool's Day, when she received the e-mail from Juilliard.

"Ninakuha n'ya nyan, 'Ha Ha', 50-pound budding ballerina said.

In March, two days after her graduation recital at the PHSA, Kendra and her mother Evelyn flew to San Francisco, one of the five cities in the United States holding auditions for Juilliard.

Think Julia Stiles in the movie "Save the Last Dance."

Work hard, pray harder

Juilliard welcomes applications from qualified students from outside the United States. You just have to plan ahead. For instance, Kendra's mom who works as a purser for Philippine Airlines, had been researching the States, checking out dance schools. Of course, Juilliard was top on her list. But with its $26,000 a year tuition and board, Kendra and her mom could only dream, work hard and pray even harder.

A year ago, Kendra submitted her application and audition videotape, where she performed two variations. For her audition piece, she danced a pas de deux from "Swan Lake" and for her modern piece, she performed "Frequency," with choreography by Gerard Mosrais, a former Ballet Theater member.

Her application, the growing recommendations from her teachers, plus the video impressed the Juilliard faculty pre-screening committee, she qualified for a personal audition.

Kendra arrived in San Francisco with no time for jet lag or nervous jitters. She decided to look at the audition as just another dance class. She just had to dance better.

The audition was a whole day and had four components. The first stage consisted of a ballet class and a modern dance class.

In five, there were 50 young men and women auditioning in the studio.

And then there were 10. Kendra was among them.

In the second stage, the applicants was required to perform a solo, not to exceed two minutes in length. If the faculty thought it necessary, the applicant would be asked to perform a second solo. Kendra again performed "Frequency" for her modern dance. The screening board's decision was solid.

And then there were five

Waiting downstairs was Kendra's mother Evelyn.

"I was so nervous because I didn't know what was happening," she recalled. She watched dancers walk in the studio full of confidence and then leave reclused in tears. "But Kendra wasn't among them, so I took it as a good sign."

It was more than that. She was among the final five who were on to the last two stages of the audition; the final eyes in a sequence that would be taught and coached on the spot, and the informal interview.

Honor medals

Kendra gave a superb audition and knew afterwards that she had made it to the five finalists. But she refused to celebrate just yet. The results would depend on the number of qualified applicants in those other slots, and only 12 girls and 12 boys would be accepted.

"I wasn't expecting to pass," Kendra said. "I thought that while everyone else, I was lucky."

"Kendra's too humble," her father Butch Samson, a pilot, said. "During her graduation at the PHSA, she removed her medals once she got down from stage."

And Kendra had a bunch of them. High Honor for Academics, Artistic Excellence in Ballet, the Maria Mahiling Award for Ballet, and a bronze medal at the 9th Asian-Pacific International Ballet Competition in Tokyo, Japan.

She mentioned her good fortune to years back. However, family and close friends knew she deserved the scholarship for all the hard work and dedication she had put in to hone her talent.

She was four when she started taking ballet classes at the Hadji-Cruz School of Dance at Dasmariñas Learning Center. Later, she transferred to Ballet Repertory under Amelia Garcia-Velo, where she took weekly classes until 2000.

In 1996, she also began training at the CCP Dance School under Noordin Jamalun. After finishing Grade 6 at Pueblo, Kendra auditioned for the PHSA and was accepted as a ballet scholar. She trained under Marie Ibarra, Rafael Perlias, Benilo Jaymalin. On weekends, she went home to Manila and took intensive dance training with Victor Urmeña.

Also sports

Kendra also managed to squeeze in piano, violin, painting, and drama classes. "I like to read, listen to music and do broadwork. I also play basketball," she added.

When she isn't in leotards, Kendra is usually in track pants and a loose t-shirt.

In the only girl of five siblings, it comes as no surprise that a little bit of quiet would come in somewhere.

But when the clips on her pointe shoes and warm-up dance, you know the was meant for the stage, not the hard court.

For Kendra, life in dance

Kendra will leave for New York next month. Catch her and the Magnificent Ballet in "Swan Alley," a ballet suite specially for Kendra. One-night performance at the CCP Tanghalang Aurelio Tolentino on Wednesday, July 28 at 7:30 p.m. Tickets at P500 and P800 with special discounts for students and senior citizens. Call CCP at 832-1125 or Amy Tanyag at 471-2009.

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Saturday, July 10, 2004
14th Week in Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Is 6: 1-8
Gospel: Mt 10:24-33

Jesus said to his apostles, "A student is not above his teacher, or a slave above his master. It student should be glad to become like his teacher, and the slave like his master. If the head of the family has been called Beelzebul, how much more the members of the family! So, do not be afraid of them.

"There is nothing covered that will not be uncovered, and nothing hidden that will not be made known. What I am telling you in the dark, you must speak in the light. What you hear in private, proclaim from the housetops.

"Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but have no power to kill the soul. Rather be afraid of him who can destroy both body and soul in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for two cents? Yet not one sparrow falls to the ground without your Father's consent. As for you, even the hair of your head has been counted. So do not be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

"Whoever acknowledges me before others I will acknowledge before my Father in heaven. Whoever rejects me before others I will reject before my Father in heaven."

Commentary

We are "ordinary" (commonplace) on this day, so Jesus (Fr. Efren Carlos) will give you sentences and phrases of Mother Kolbe's sermon on it. It is probably his most obscure sermon, but it should help make sure very obscure phrases. "There is nothing hidden that will not be revealed."

"When God works in the soul, He loves His work. Where the soul is on which God performs His work, there such is so great that God considers her free, and He sees in nothing but God, and Jesus Himself and His nature. One being and His Godhead... In this love in which God loves Himself in three relations.

"I take a bowl of water and put a mirror in it and set it under the rays of the sun. Then the sun sends forth its light rays both from the disc and from the sun's depth, and yet there is no division. The reflection of the sun in the mirror is one with the sun, and yet it is not. So it is with God and in no one with His nature, with Him the beyond and His Godhead, and yet He is not the soul. The reflection of the soul in God is God, and yet she is not.

Whoever has understood this sermon, good luck to them! If no one had him here I should have had to work it to this reflecting bar!"

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SUPREME COURT DOCTRINES

[illegible]

Gov't pleads: Spare life of De la Cruz

Front page 1

Sunday Manila time. But in words at video hookup aired on Thursday, Iraq TV Al Jazeera reported that two men described as Bulgarian residents were being held in Iraq under threat of death unless U.S. troops free Iraqi prisoners within 24 hours. *(See Hostage, Page A8.)*

Ms Arroyo did not name the Filipino hostages in her speech at the Philippine International Convention Center, although she used the crisis called for national solidarity and prayer.

"Let's pray for the safe and immediate release of one of our countrymen who had been abducted in Iraq. Ambassador Gloria is in Baghdad to do what is humanly possible to secure the release of our kababayan," she said.

Ms Arroyo also also imposed a news blackout over the negotiations for De la Cruz's release.

"I shall not comment about the situation at this most crucial and sensitive point in time, when we have to withhold information on our movements to ensure the safety of the hostage," she said, adding:

"Ask the media not to offer speculations or theories. A subject national interest is involved in this matter."

Meeting with family

While the members of the Cabinet, chaired by Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo, met meeting at the Presidential Guesthouse, Mr. Arroyo was meeting with the de la Cruz family at the Blue Wing Mansion.

De la Cruz's wife Angelita came with seven of their eight children, his father Feliciano, sister-in-law Soyona and uncle-in-law Alberto Pineda. They arrived in Malacañang at around 5 p.m. in a Clark Development Corp. bus.

Labor Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas said the President assured the weeping family during the 20-minute meeting that "the security guarantees" were underway to secure De la Cruz's safe release.

Sto. Tomas said that as soon as the President entered the room, Arsenia broke into tears and begged her.

"Most of the time the conversation was in Kapampangan, but to sanitize and [spare] media any appeal to all good [hearted] Muslims all over the world to help her husband because he is only working so that he can provide food to his children and send them to school," Sto. Tomas said. *(See story on Page A7.)*

The labor secretary said she did not recall Arsenia asking the President to yield to the hostage takers' demand—"the just said that they are hoping everything will be done to secure her husband's safe and immediate release because he is not a soldier, not a combatant."

Sto. Tomas said the family also asked his privacy. "It's not my material thing that every 30-35 minutes they are asked [about the status] [everybody] wants crying," she said.

First crisis

Ironically, the President talked about the first crisis facing her new administration during the Overseas Employment Summit, which each local manpower agency to protect the thousands of Filipinos leaving each year for greener pastures overseas.

"I leave it to our Iraq team to do what has to be done, in consultation with the transition government of Iraq and our allies, to get the hostage home safely," Ms Arroyo said in her speech at the summit held at the PICC.

She reiterated her order for the suspension of the deployment of workers to Iraq pending the resolution of the hostage crisis.

Albert said in a briefing at Malacañang that Ginato would assist Philippine Charge d'Affaires Rosario Endaya in Baghdad in working for the release with the help of an official of the Iraqi Governing Council.

She said the Iraqi official also helped Endaya in the release of a Filipino chief, Francisco Zapanta, similarly abducted last April.

Sto. Tomas also stated that Iraq official in the course of expressing confidence that the hostages would be able to link up with De la Cruz's captors.

According to Sto. Tomas, one of the reasons for the success of the previous negotiation was a man who mediated "in full witness of everybody."

Albert also said the situation was "very sensitive."

"So let's please leave the negotiations to the people who are there right now. We are hoping for the best because a life is at stake. The government is doing its utmost best. The lines of communication are open," she said.

The influential Catholic Church added its voice to the call for the government to do everything to save the lie De la Cruz.

Manila Archbishop Leodegario Rosales called on government leaders to solemnly consider De la Cruz's plight before making a final decision on the matter.

"That will again be a political decision because there are some commitments [of the government], but we believe in the sensitivity that it should extend to those [commitments] if they are connected with the life of human," Rosales said in an interview at the World Trade Center.

The Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines called De la Cruz's abduction last month occasion to address among some 4,000 Filipino clergy, who concluded a weeklong national congress in Pasay City yesterday.

Archbishop Antonio Boyza initiated a signature campaign to save the life of De la Cruz. The petition was passed among the priests and bishops at the World Trade Center, and De la Cruz was also especially remembered in the concluding Mass of the congress.

We join his family, his prisoners mates, and the entire nation in mourning the horrors that he is spared the ultimate cruelty. We also pray for the terrorists that the Lord will soften their hearts so that they will release Angelo," Archbishop Fernando Capalla, CBCP president, said in a statement.

Al-Jazeera

Various personalities weighed in on the issue.

Speaker Jose de Venecia Jr. solicited Executive Secretary Romulo that Al Jazeera could help the key in the release of De la Cruz.

De Venecia said Philippine diplomatic officials in Baghdad and in Doha, Qatar, the home base of Al-Jazeera, could reach base with the correspondents to see how we can get in touch [with the hostage] and work out an arrangement."

But militant party-list representatives in the House strongly called for the pullout.

Bayan Muna Rep. Satur Ocampo (his 1st Iraqi was "long enough for the President to immediately withdraw the 51-member Philippine contingent, which the government's policy of support to the United States' unjust occupation of Iraq, and pave the way for the safe and immediate release of De la Cruz."

"We can no longer afford to sacrifice another Filipino migrant worker's life for the sake of the US monopolistic agenda in the Middle Empire," Ocampo said.

Gabriela Rep. Liza Maza said Ms Arroyo could save the life of De la Cruz if she could "muster the political will to defy, for once, her commitment to the US government."

Lone voice

Sen. Panfilo Lacson was the lone voice in the Senate advocating the pullout of troops.

And the Senate elected president Lacson said, if he could himself, would order the pullout.

"It's not because we are giving in to the demands of the Iraqi terrorists, but because it was wrong, in the first place, to send the [Philippine Humanitarian Assistance and Theater Security Operations] troops there in the first place," Lacson said.

Sen. Senator Manuel Villar and Rodolfo Biazon said Philippine troops should remain in Iraq.

Villar, who had previously sought the withdrawal of the troops, said redeployment that the was pitching a different line because "we missed the opportunity" to pull out with the hostage-taking.

He said the government could have withdrawn the troops earlier.

Biazon said this was not the time to consider a pullout "because this will have been serious consequences."

In a separate interview, he said "nothing should be off the table."

Sen. Aquilino Pimentel said the first thing the government should do was negotiate with the Iraqis. He said the Philippines was in a good negotiating position because De la Cruz was not in Iraq to mount acts of aggression.

Vice President Noli de Castro said in a statement that De La Cruz's abduction was "a concrete act."

He said the Philippine government should not be "intimidated by acts of terrorism."

But he added, "We should do everything to save the life of Angelo. The life of every Filipino is the sovereign and economic responsibility of the government. All measures must be considered. But at the moment, the utmost issue is to get Angelo back alive." *With reports from Martin F. Manlf, Blanche S. Rivera, Cecille Pablo, Christine O. Avendaño and Jerome Aning*

REFUGE at the Palace: Hostage Angelo de la Cruz's wife, Arsenia, is brought to meet President Arroyo on Friday and told not to talk to the media as a possible media hype could impact negatively on the fate of her husband. PALACE PHOTO

Pain and hope . . .

Front page 1

to the media yet," Buenvenida Angelo's uncle, told the Inquirer.

Mercy Marie "Bobbi" Tuazon, citing sylvain-conversion men with Darma Central Luzon University Mabalacat, Metro Manila, could be had the gag order on the news.

On Thursday night and until Friday morning, Mercado said he did not know where Angelo's family or relatives were residing. He would not even confirm whether the De la Cruzes were from Pampanga. *(See banner story.)*

Younger kids

Angelo had worked overseas earlier, but for five years he was unemployed, until in August last year he found a job as a truck driver in Saudi Arabia.

"We did not want him to go because the war was ongoing [in Iraq], but he insisted," said his eldest son, Jefferis.

"He wanted my younger children to complete their school [up to] college," Jefferis said, referring to Antonio, 16; Jerome, 15; Jeric, 7; and Jeffery, 4.

Jeric is blind in one eye, Jefferis added, because of a birth defect.

Jeanna said all the wanted some assurance that her father was safe and being pursued in Manila.

"I don't care if I don't go to school again. I just want him back," she said, doubting a battle of letters that her father sent her last September.

In need of repair

Although employed abroad, Angelo has not been able to earn enough to build a new house, Jefferis said.

The family home is a hut in need of major repair. With the money that Angelo had been sending monthly, Arsenia managed to have the roof replaced with galvanized iron sheets and the kitchen expanded a bit.

On the wall immediately at the door are hung the framed diplomas of the older children.

Secretary Rodolfo Capalla, CBCP president, said he was praying for the safe release of De la Cruz.

Rosales said the CBCP would continue to pray for the safe release of Angelo.

Bishop Oscar Cruz has previously summoned Ms Arroyo's envoy, Jose Cuisia, since "she had the political machinery, the humanitarian, the people and the funding, so even before the election the likelihood of her winning the elections was strong."

Asked if his new investigation into the elections might reopen the flames of partisan squabbling, Cardinal Vidal replied: "We look ages have our own conscience. We have to see if we can help to call them the truth."

Church leaders played a key role in setting by popular protests that eventually toppled two presidents: Ferdinand Marcos in the "People Power" revolt in 1986 and convicted tainted Joseph Estrada in an uprising in 2001.

Congress of clergy

Yesterday, the historical gathering in Manila of some 4,000 priests and bishops all over the country ended yesterday with a renewed commitment in a simpler, holier lifestyle of the clergy and a mission to be agents of reconciliation among those whose relationships have been broken by politics.

Archbishop Capalla said that it was now time for the priests to practice the lessons of the Second National Congress of the Clergy, which was held for the first time in 1969 at the height of the turmoil of the clergy church and country.

He said that the post-election scenario in the country was a good start for the renewed priests. *RPT with a report from Blanche Rivera*

CBCP holds assembly to probe poll fraud

Front page 1

thanksgiving Mass for Ms Arroyo after she was inaugurated in Cebu on June 30).

At the Mass, he had hailed Ms Arroyo's victory, saying it marked "a new beginning for our nation."

Old, now opportunity to move forward and to fulfill our dreams and aspirations."

Staunch Catholic

A staunch Catholic, Ms Arroyo has courted the favor of the Church, which counts the end majority of Filipinos as its followers.

She invoked God's name frequently and has stayed away from pursuing contraception which the Church brands upon, despite the country's runaway population growth.

But Ms Arroyo has also angered the bishops by saying in appearance for the restoration of capital punishment and by maintaining government ties curious, a vital source of income for her cash-strapped administration.

Sources close to the Church say there is some division within the Church toward Ms Arroyo. Some bishops question her election victory while activist priests accuse her of graft. However, many other bishops have supported her.

A special session offered by Ms Arroyo and other Church leaders, Gonzalez Tanseco, has declined to comment on the controversy.

Even apparent attempt to head off electoral challenges in Ms Arroyo, the CBCP through its presidents, Archbishop Fernando Capalla, said in late May that the May 10 polls had been generally peaceful and fair.

"If there were reports of cheating locally or regionally, the challenges cannot say that there was a national conspiracy to engage in massive cheating," said the CBCP statement, quoted Capalla.

Former CBCP president Archbishop Oscar Cruz has previously summoned Ms Arroyo's envoy, Jose Cuisia, since "she had the political machinery, the humanitarian, the people and the funding, so even before the election the likelihood of her winning the elections was strong."

Asked if his new investigation into the elections might reopen the flames of partisan squabbling, Cardinal Vidal replied: "We look ages have our own conscience. We have to see if we can help to call them the truth."

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Scourge of drug traffickers to hunt illegal recruiters

Front page 1

retired police officer Reynaldo Aydo as its chief.

Aydo chief Aida down those illegal recruiters and make them pay for their crimes," Ms Arroyo told delegates at the Overseas Employment Summit held at the Philippine International Convention Center.

She asked Teplilo task force chief also take down the syndicates that issue fake passports, secure visas and send shipload after shipload of workers, sometimes to their deaths, to nightclubs."

Ms Arroyo announced the creation of the task force while confronting a crisis involving seven more Filipino workers the hostage-taking in Iraq of truck driver Angelo de la Cruz, whose long militants have threatened to behead if the does not pull out Filipino troops from that country.

Airport, immigration officials

The formation of the task force was part of a package of measures announced by Ms Arroyo to protect Filipinos seeking employment abroad.

Setting aside P10 million as an initial budget of the task force, Ms Arroyo ordered Aydo to crackdown on illegal recruiters and their cohorts among airport and immigration officials and personnel.

Documents from the Commission on Overseas Filipinos (Cfo) show there are 7.76 million Filipinos residing abroad. Around 1.36 million of them are so called overseas workers, while 1.01 million are irregulars without overseas documentation. CFO research officer Sy Mirasolas said.

As of February last year, more 1.4 million of them are deployed in the Middle East.

Last year, at least 1,620 Filipinos were reported to have been rescued by illegal recruiters while at least 646 others were victimized from January to June this year, according to government statistics.

Risks of life abroad

Saying the exodus of Filipinos seeking better paying jobs abroad could not be stopped, the President ordered several government agencies to come up with a "workforce" to protect the rights of Filipino migrant workers to keep them safe from terrorists and abuses by recruiters and employers.

Ms Arroyo said the summit was a "fitting tribute to our OFWs who risk so much to help their families and homes." She thanked them for giving her an "overwhelming mandate" in the recent presidential election and vowed she would not take this mandate lightly.

"Like all Filipinos, my heart bleeds for our countrymen whose lives are at risk in foreign lands," she said.

Ms Arroyo reiterated her longstanding promise to create more or less 10 million jobs in her term so as to stop the need for many Filipinos to stay in the Philippines."

Exploiting desperation

But she said that many would still be drawn to seek greener pastures elsewhere.

"This is an inevitable result of the globalized regime where labor, capital, many resources and many goods move from one country to another. This is not necessarily bad as long as there is protection for workers in the midst of measures and compensation and as long as desperation is not exploited by unscrupulous," she said.

She said the summit, which drew together foreign and labor officials and representatives of illegal placement agencies, was all about preventing the exploitation of desperate Filipinos.

"We know the enemy, the illegal recruiters," she said. "Lured by money with many dollars to be earned, many innocent Filipinos, because of these illegal recruiters, ended up in jail and suffered in the hands of unfit employers."

'Fearless ex-cop'

National participants applauded when Ms Arroyo said she had brought Aydo along to join him her marching orders—that "illegal recruiters from our terrorists are thus."

She specifically directed Aydo to "shut down those police captains."

Aydo, whose life as a law enforcement leader has a chaotic one that a district of the Western Police District (WPD) in Manila, is known as a "fearless ex-cop" and a "no-nonsense" police officer.

He is also known for his tough talk on illegal recruiters.

Aydo, who is set to retire in October, said he would "shut down" illegal recruiters who "prey on the poor."

"Illegal recruiters are terrorists. They are the modern-day slave traders," he said.

He said the summit, which drew together foreign and labor officials and representatives of illegal placement agencies, was all about preventing the exploitation of desperate Filipinos.

"We know the enemy, the illegal recruiters," she said. "Lured by money with many dollars to be earned, many innocent Filipinos, because of these illegal recruiters, ended up in jail and suffered in the hands of unfit employers."

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BANGKOK AIDS CONFERENCE

UN report says 9,000 Filipinos have HIV

By Frank Cimatu
INQ Northern Luzon Bureau

BANGKOK—The number of people living with HIV/the virus that causes AIDS, in the Philippines is still very low but has more than doubled compared to 2001, according to a United Nations report on the global AIDS epidemic.

The report, which will be released at the 15th International AIDS conference opening here on Monday, showed that at the end of 2003, there were 9,000 Filipinos with AIDS, or more than double the 4,400 recorded in 2001. Almost all of these are adults aged 15 to 49.

Deaths caused by AIDS complications in the Philippines since 2003 were estimated at less than 500, compared to less than 200 in 2001.

The global percentage of people living with HIV in 2003 was estimated at 37.8 million, compared to 34.9 million in 2001. The 2003 figure is about 1.1 percent of the total world population.

But even if the Philippines is still counted among the "low and slow" in terms of HIV incidence, the country still has much to worry about, said UN AIDS Executive Director Dr. Peter Piot.

AIDS activists in Manila said the figure may be underreported because of Filipinos' tendency to stigmatize the disease.

"HIV/AIDS is the true globalization disease," Piot told journalists at a media forum here.

He said Asian countries are experiencing a fast rate of infection.

"The epidemic is expanding rapidly in this region, with sharp increases in HIV infections in China, Indonesia and Vietnam," he said.

A total of 1.1 million people in Asia were infected in 2003, the UN said, noting the steep rise in HIV infections in China, Indonesia, Vietnam and India.

In 2003, a fifth of the new infections around the world were in Asia. Even Japan and the Middle East, the favored destinations of Filipino overseas contract workers, showed a sharp increase in HIV/AIDS incidence in the past three years.

Another trend reported by the 2004 UN AIDS report is what Piot called the "feminization" of AIDS.

"In 1985 when AIDS was first reported, most of the cases were middle-class gay men, in Asia and in other parts of the world now, 50 percent of all people with AIDS are women. In some parts of Africa, it is even 60 percent," Piot said.

According to the UN report, Filipino women aged 15 to 49 with HIV quintupled 2,000 in the 2000s.

Piot said the risk to women was biological and social. Transmission of HIV from men to women is more efficient than women to men.

RP renews chicken import ban

THE GOVERNMENT yesterday said a ban on poultry imports from 12 Asian and North American countries would stay in place following fresh bird flu outbreaks in Southeast Asia.

The ban includes all chicken or poultry products from Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Laos, Pakistan, Taiwan, Thailand and Vietnam, plus the state of British Columbia in Canada and the US states of Delaware, Maryland, Pennsylvania and Texas.

China, Thailand and Vietnam have all reported new cases in recent days, sparking fears of a resurgence of the winter outbreak that left 34 people dead and devastated the region's poultry industry. AFP

27 nations ink pact vs smoking

ALL 27 member states of the World Health Organization's Western Pacific Region have signed the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, which is designed to stub out the threat that smoking poses to global health.

WHO's Western Pacific Region is the only WHO region in which all governments have signed the treaty, the WHO said in a statement released by its regional headquarters in Manila on Friday.

"The fact that one hundred percent of our member states have signed the treaty within one year is a remarkable achievement," said Shigeru Omi, WHO regional director for the Western Pacific.

"Of course, we know there is still a lot of hard work to do. Tobacco kills 3,000 people each day in our region," he said.

"We have one third of the world's smokers, the highest rates of male smoking, and the fastest increase of smoking among children and young women. But we believe we are now on the right track to turn back the tobacco scourge." AFP

Rosales; 51

LORENZO L. Rosales of Quezon City died on Thursday of a heart attack. He was 51.

He is survived by his wife Cynthia, son Chuy, daughter-in-law Rosemarie and grandchildren Kenny and Kevin.

The body lies at the Loyola Memorial Chapel D in Guadalupe, Makati City. Interment will be held at 10 a.m. on Monday, July 12, at the Holy Cross Memorial Park in Novaliches, Quezon City after an 8 a.m. [illegible]

The WORLD

Edito Lorenzo B. Ilanga

Now, 2 Bulgarians' lives on the line

HAPPY ENDING—Pakistani Amajad Wahaz (left) is hugged by his mother Ganeda Jahan after arriving at Islamabad July 7. Wahaz, taken hostage while working as a driver in Iraq, was recently released by Islamic militants after 9 days in captivity. REUTERS

BAGHDAD—Militants in Iraq threatened on Thursday to kill two Bulgarian hostages within 24 hours unless US-led forces freed prisoners, stepping up pressure on Prime Minister Iyad Allawi's new interim government.

The deadline satellite television station Al Jazeera said the tape was from the Tawhid and Jihad group headed by Jordanian Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, who has been accused by Washington of links to Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida.

The tape showed two men, identified as Bulgarians, sitting in front of masked captors, two of them wielding automatic weapons while a statement is narrowed.

"The group and the Bulgarian government have responsibility over the safety of its citizens because it has sent troops to Iraq," said Al Jazeera.

Bulgaria vowed on Friday it would not change its policies and identified the pair as civilian truck drivers.

"Bulgaria is a stable state with a predictable foreign policy and we cannot expect it would change its foreign policy because of one or another group," Foreign Minister Solomon Passi told state radio.

Once said Bulgaria had contacted the US government over the demand that the United States free imprisoned Iraqis, but gave no details.

Bulgarian state radio named the two hostages as Ivailo Kepov and Georgi Lazov and said they had left for Iraq on June 19.

The foreign ministry had received no demand from the hostage-takers for a pullout of Bulgarian troops, it said.

Bulgaria has 450 troops in the 32-nation force in Iraq, based in the southern city of Karbala.

Private television channel BTV said the two drivers, working for a Bulgarian company, had reminded cars from their trucks in the northern Iraqi city of Mosul and had been on the return journey when they were taken hostage.

The US military has branded Iraqnews—who has claimed responsibility for the beheadings of an American and a South Korean—as an number one target in Iraq, blaming him for much of the insurgency rocking the country.

The latest kidnapping came amid fierce pressure on Allawi's interim government, coming only a day after another group of militants threatened to kill a Filipino hostage unless Manila withdrew its troops from Iraq.

The interim government is heavily dependent on the pro-, even of around 140,000 US and foreign troops for security, while it holds sporadic fledgling forces.

Kidnappings have created shortages of foreigners since April in press demands for foreign troops to leave Iraq, to deter foreigners from working while US forces are on contract terrorists. Reuters

5 US soldiers, 2 Iraqis killed in mortar attack

BAGHDAD, Iraq—Five US soldiers and two Iraqis were killed in a major rebel mortar attack on the national guard headquarters here Thursday as the Turkish army warned Iraq Kurds against trying to change the demographic mix of the ethnically volatile northern city of Kirkuk.

Insurgents rained down 20 mortar rounds on the Iraqi national guard center, destroying the building and claiming the lives of five US soldiers and two policemen, Maj. Neal O'Brien of the 1st Infantry Division said.

Eighteen US soldiers and four national guards were also wounded in the surprise attack, he added.

After the shelling, fighting raged in Samarra as US troops and Iraqi guardsmen sought to line out the rebels and an Apache helicopter fired hellfire missiles at a building, killing four insurgents, O'Brien said.

Dozens of masked fighters armed with machine guns and rocket-propelled grenade launchers launched an assault on the city's streets, leaving residents—many of whom blame the US military for the violence—in terror.

Residents of this restive city, located 120 km north of Baghdad, paid a heavy price, with the local hospital reporting dozens of casualties.

In neighboring Turkey, the military Thursday warned Iraqi Kurds against trying to change the demographics of the ethnically volatile northern city of Kirkuk, saying unrest in the oil-rich area would constitute a "serious security concern" for Ankara.

"Some ethnic groups are pursuing efforts to change the demographic structure of Tuzluk while steps are being taken to bring stability to Iraq," the deputy head of the general staff, Ilker Basbug, told a monthly press briefing in Ankara in an indirect reference to the Iraqi Kurds.

The general warned that failure to find a "just and lasting solution" to the status of the oil-rich city would threaten Iraq's territorial and political integrity and would be seen as "a serious security concern for Turkey." AFP

Japanese firm ordered to pay WWII Sino workers

TOKYO—A Japanese company that used Chinese slave laborers during World War II was ordered by a court in Japan on Friday to pay 27.5 million yen ($250,000) in compensation to some of the victims and their families.

Judge Satoshi Suzuki of Utsunomiya High court ordered Nishimatsu Construction Co. to pay the money in full as demanded by the plaintiffs, a court spokesperson said, ending part of the judge's verdict.

The five plaintiffs—three survivors and two family members representing two who have since died—said they were brought over by Japanese military in July 1944 and forced to work for Nishimatsu as virtual slaves at a power plant construction site until the war ended a year later.

They were barely fed and received no income at all because a day without pay or practical assistance, according to statements on their support group's website.

Some 40,000 Chinese were taken to Japan in the early 1940s to work as wartime laborers, mostly in coal mines and ports. Tens of thousands of others from Asian countries were also brought to work without pay during World War II.

Forced labor is a working crime, not a human right," Kenji Ueda of Kyodo News agency while listening down the ruling. "Nishimatsu forced them to perform hard labor under dangerous conditions over an extended period of time."

Some of the victims were forced to work for Nishimatsu during the war and more than 80 died from either illness or accidents, according to the website.

Among the plaintiffs, Yang Bao, suspended by the family by his arm, died during the US money bombing of Hiroshima in August 1945. Jia Xuewen, a plaintiff in the earlier stages of the suit, died of gastric problems at age 82 in August 2002, and his son was taken up by family members, the site said.

Nishimatsu declined to comment on the ruling.

Friday's decision overturned a lower court ruling from July 2002, which ordered the plaintiffs' claims had been forced to work under harsh conditions by Tokyo-based Nishimatsu, but it failed to award them damages, saying the statute of limitations had expired. AP

No prison for Swedish FM's killer

STOCKHOLM—A Swedish appeals court on Thursday overturned a life sentence against [illegible] over the murder of Swedish foreign minister Anna Lindh last year, ordering him instead two psychiatric care.

The Svea Court of Appeals upheld the lower court's ruling that Mijailo Mijailovic, 25, committed murder when he limited Lindh repeatedly at 6pm. 12, but said that rather than spending life behind bars for the crime he needed psychiatric care.

The appeals court said Mijailovic "committed the crime under the influence of a serious psychiatric disorder and he still suffers from this disorder." A chief reporter who conducted that he suffered from an "unspecified psychotic syndrome."

Lindh died of her injuries on Sept. 11, a day after Mijailovic knifed her repeatedly in the stomach, chest and arms while she was shopping in a Stockholm department store without a bodyguard.

Her murder sent Sweden into a state of shock 17 years after the self-assumed 1986 assassination of prime minister Olof Palme.

While he had hoped to be freed outside from the murder charge, Mijailovic had through his lawyer Peter Althin asked the court to order him into psychiatric care. If it did choose to uphold the murder conviction.

Althin said Thursday he was "very pleased" with the court's decision.

The ruling elected both surprise and praise in legal circles but Lindh's widower, Bo Holmberg, was temporarily [illegible].

"The appeals court ruling is legally indefensible," he said. He daily Svenskamorgonbladet/Sydsvens, saying the court failed to explain why Mijailovic could not be sent to prison. AFP

Aussie baby death mystery back in limelight

By Belinda Goldsmith

CANBERRA—The baffling case of Azaria Chamberlain, who vanished in the Australian outback 24 years ago, apparently snatched by a dingo, is back in the spotlight after an old man said he saw the baby's body in the animal's jaws.

Azaria's disappearance from a campsite near Ayers Rock, now known by its Aboriginal name Uluru, has fascinated Australians and led to several books and a Hollywood movie, "A Cry in the Dark," starring Meryl Streep.

Azaria's mother Lindy Chamberlain said she saw a dingo, or wild dog, run off with the 9-month-old daughter in its mouth on the night of Aug. 17, 1980. The body was never found.

Chamberlain's extraordinary story was met with disbelief because of no known fatal attacks by dingoes. Chamberlain was found guilty of murdering her daughter in 1982 and jailed for life but her conviction was quashed in 1988.

The mystery shot back into the spotlight this week, stealing front page headlines when Frank Cole, 78, told the Sunday Herald from newspaper in Melbourne that he knew what happened to Azaria.

Cole says he was sleeping with friends on the night Azaria disappeared and then a dingo which he later found was carrying a dead human baby in its jaws. He party of five men feared arrest if they were found to be showing to the protected national park around Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park and decided to bury the dead.

Cole said one of the five, a friend named Bob Peirini, offered to take care of the body, possibly burying it in the backyard of his home in Melbourne several thousand kilometers to the southeast of Uluru.

Cole said he had many homes after 24 years to clear his conscience after the deaths of all his camping companions, telling prime time television shows "A Current Affair." Thursday that his life had been ruined by the events of that night.

"I've expressed it all my life," said Cole, who pursued a film director very organized for the interest motion "I cry often, thinking about it."

Police said they would investigate Cole's admission but were skeptical about its veracity as were many Australians.

An opinion poll conducted by the Herald Sun newspaper found 55.6 percent of 2,347 Australians questioned believed Cole but 44.4 percent did not. Reuters

LINDY Chamberlain is seen in this undated photograph walking her baby Azaria at Ayers Rock (Uluru) circa 1980. AFP/FILE

US veep race: Charisma versus sobriety

WASHINGTON — Americans watching Vice President Dick Cheney square off against Democratic Sen. John Edwards in an October debate will see two politicians with exactly different styles: the sober Washington insider versus the silver-tongued Southern senator.

The term personality televised face off from Cleveland, Ohio, will pit an eloquent candidate with good looks against an older, balding vice president with a reputation for speaking curly.

But the debate will also highlight Edwards' brief governmental experience against a Republican with an extensive background in executive issues who has been a key adviser to President George W. Bush in his decision to invade Iraq.

"I believe that the debate between the two vice presidential (candidates) will be important and will receive a lot of press attention because the two men are so different in many ways," said Eric Davis, a political science professor at Middlebury College in Vermont.

Prior to entering politics, Edwards earned millions of dollars as a prominent trial lawyer representing parents who lost their children in botched hospital deliveries, and children who lost their parents in car wrecks.

The 51-year-old multimillionaire, who Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry picked Tuesday as his running mate, became one of North Carolina's two senators in 1998. It was his first elected position.

Cheney by contrast, has never been 38 years of government experience and is the former chief executive officer of energy giant Halliburton, a key contractor in Iraq.

Cheney, 63, was former president Gerald Ford's chief of staff in the 1970s and former president George Bush's defense secretary during the 1991 Gulf War to oust Iraq from Kuwait.

Bush, who will seek a second four years term in the Nov. 2 election, has already taken a shot against Edwards by underscoring Cheney's experience.

"I felt Cheney was the president," Bush said.

Kerry, of course, disagreed.

"This man is ready for this job. He's ready to help lead America. He's a person of compassion and conviction, of strength," Kerry said of his running mate, who won his main rival in the Democratic primary.

Democrats have pointed out that Edwards has gained foreign policy experience by serving on the Senate select committee on intelligence.

But little government experience is not necessarily a weakness.

When Bush won the 2000 presidential election, he had been governor of Texas for just six years.

Bush's decision to pick Cheney as his running mate four years ago was seen as an attempt to boost the Republican ticket's national security credentials. Kerry's pick of Edwards to this election is seen as an attempt to inject charisma into the Massachusetts senator's solid campaign. AFP

DEMOCRATIC presidential candidate Sen. John Kerry, D-Mass., hugs his newly selected running mate Sen. John Edwards, D-NC, in Cleveland, Ohio July 7.

Sihanouk to delay abdication

PHNOM PENH—Cambodia's King Norodom Sihanouk said Friday that his threat to abdicate was motivated by politics and would be delayed several months in a sign that a year-long political saga may be drawing to a close.

On Tuesday the king had threatened to step down and remain in exile in North Korea after being subdued by the country's political leaders, who last week finally agreed to form a coalition government nearly a year after polls.

But the 81-year-old monarch said he will now remain on the throne for this year and abdicate because of his age, not because of politics.

SIHANOUK

"I will delay my abdication it order to avoid any confusion over me being in dispute or upset with any important dignitaries or political rulers," King Sihanouk said in a statement in Khmer.

"I have decided to abdicate because I am too old and I also have some health problems. I am following the model of some European kings and queens... whom I have always respected deeply," he said.

In a separate Friendly statement, the king said he would return to Cambodia in September or October to live in Siem Reap, near the famed Angkor temple complex, and then need a letter of abdication to the Council of the Throne.

He said he would depart North Korea on Aug. 3 to return to Cambodia, where he originally went in January for medical checks and then stayed away as the country's political crisis deepened after inconclusive elections last July.

Tuesday's announcement was widely interpreted as the monarch's way of expressing his frustration with the political process and encouraging political parties to form a coalition government.

The national assembly meeting for the first time since Prime Minister Hun Sen and his royalist partner Prince Norodom Ranariddh ended their past, approved the ruling deal Thursday. AFP

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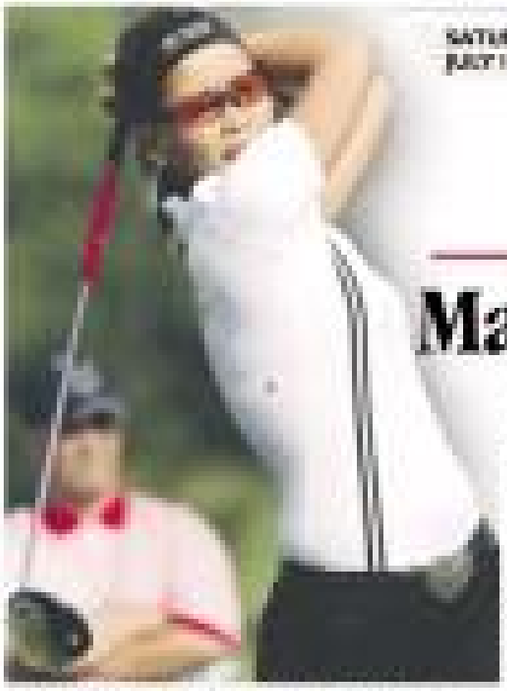


ROSALES trips on a double bogey on the last hole

Mallon at it again in Canada; Jenny 3 off

NIAGARA FALLS, Ontario—Meg Mallon, who won the US Women's Open last week, had a 7-under 65 Thursday to take a two-stroke lead in the first round of the Canadian Women's Open.

It was a seven-birdie, bogey-free round and erased an unfortunate loss that erased a similar 65 last Sunday when she was first round US Open.

Gloria Park, Johanna Head and Kris Tschetter were at 5-under, while Filipino Jennifer Rosales, Dawn Coe-Jones and Angela Stanford were needs or stroke back in the $1.3-million event.

Rosales had the most interesting day among the leaders, scoring a roller in one round, her up-down-down performance at the US Open.

After going to a stroke through 17 on Thursday at the Legends on the Niagara course, Rosales double-bogeyed the par-4 18th, her final hole, requiring two shots to get out of a fairway bunker.

"I was greedy. I got too aggressive and paid for it," she said. "It's tough to take, but you have to move on."

Jo stuck for rewarding Our Lingering Oh Open experience.

"It's still in the back of my head," Rosales said. "It will take time for me to forget about it."

While she struggled with her game in the final round last week, Rosales stuck on the green that time with only 24 putts.

Mallon has extended her streak to 43 straight holes without a bogey—the third-longest stretch on the LPGA Tour this season. And she is 17 under for her last three rounds of competition.

"You have to carry your momentum and know how to handle that," Mallon said. "And when you're playing well you have to go inside it and don't fight it."

Besides Mallon, who's second on the money list, it's a wide-open field after three of the former that's missing Swedish newcomer and Grace Park, who have established to win five of this year's LPGA tournaments.

Defending champion Beth Daniel is among a group of players at 3-under. AP

New-look 67th UAAP gets going

By Jeannine W. Pays

WITH the graduation of senior superstars, a new-look University Athletic Association of the Philippines unfolds its 67th season today at the Araneta Coliseum.

The top rookie reign league still parade a fresh generation of hard-court personalities, rookie coaches and seasoned players starting at 1 p.m.

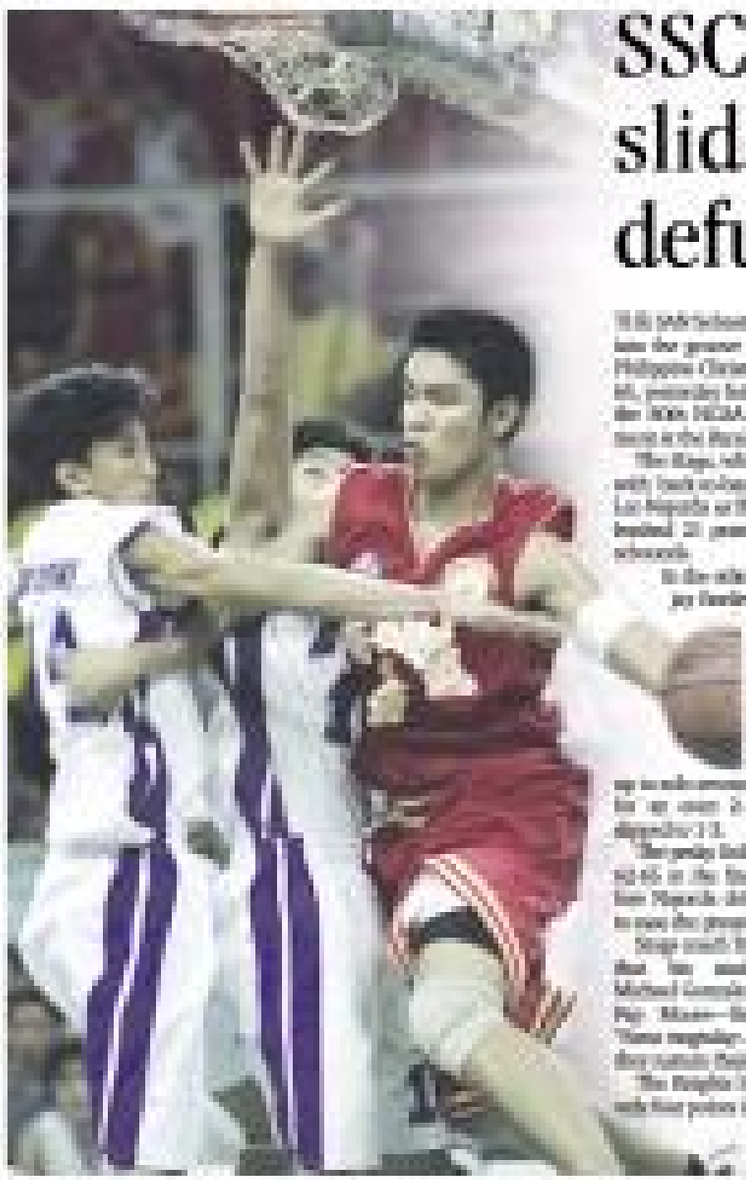
Defending champion Far Eastern University Tamaraws open their bid for back-to-back titles as they face the University of the East Red Warriors in the main game.

Although the Tamaraws have lost seven key players, they still have their most devoted hopes, the 2003 Finals MVP and Defensive Player of the Year Alex Mumaway for this year's campaign are Chuck Miranda, Mark Isip, PJ Rosales and Leo Valdez.

It's a tough assignment for new Warriors mentor Dindo Pumaren, who will be relying to a team composed mostly of freshmen and sophomores. The core of the Reno-based squad, which finished third last season, has practically been wiped out. EC Cavalera, Paolo Bugbalo and RJ Madrigal are the only experienced newcomers.

The Adamson University Falcons of coach Luigi Trillo, ranked the most seasoned in the UAAP, opens battle the University of the Philippines Fighting Maroons in the other action encounter.

The Falcons, fifth place last year, have seen their opponents and are now among the pre-season favorites. Rookie Mark Alcedo, who averaged 15.2 points and 6.1 rebounds in 2003, will again lead the team. [illegible]



THE STAGES Regorta tries to pass off a double team

SSC Stags halt slide; Knights defuse Bombers

[illegible] the UAAP Seniors' basketball finals got into the groove as they downed the Philippine Christian U Knights, 74-65, yesterday for their third victory in the 2004 NCAA basketball tournament in the Royal category.

The Stags, who started the season with back-to-back losses, rallied on Lee Rosario as the reigning MVP unloaded 21 points and grabbed 11 rebounds.

In the other senior game, the Jose Rizal Heavy Bombers (2-3) fell to the Letran Knights (3-2) for the second time in the season, 72-65.

Lorenzo, who's been SSC for the most [illegible] up to only averaged as 3.3 PPG avg. for an even 2-2 start while JRU dropped to 2-3.

The pesky Knights [illegible] 62-65 in the final two minutes before Rosario drilled a three-pointer to ease the pressure on the Stags.

Stags coach Tim Mariano [illegible] that his main men—Rosario, Michael Gonzales, Chris Salcedo and Pep Mamon—finally stepped up. "Some regulars today on the 3 [illegible] contest [illegible]," he said.

The Knights held the Heavens to only four points in the second quarter to open a 40-19 edge at the break.

The Knights led by as much as 22

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

Still no action on logo bashing

By Jose Nocera

RED Bull graciously accepted its share pleading defaults but the latitude are not about to give up their fight for redress over an incident in the Finals involving their originals applied in the Philippine Basketball Association.

The Bulls are seeking injunctive action against a Barangay Ginebra entertainment group they accused of destroying the Red Bull team logo in Game 2 of the best-of-five series.

But reservations or despair comments appeal apart a Red Bull logo while performing a routine dunking a break in the second quarter, infuriating Red Bull and league officials.

Team manager Yeng Guiao said the Commissioner's Office has not yet acted on the "unfair conduct."

"We are waiting for the PBA official verdict on the matter. The issue will be put to test once the Commissioner's Office makes on it," said Guiao.

Ginebra officials have seen a written apology to both the league and the Red Bull management. They also stressed that it wasn't the initiative of the company but the handiwork of its overeager Ginebra marketing group.

Ginebra marketing man Ferwin Jamin said he wasn't aware that the dunk-as-dance performers they hired would ripe the Red Bull logo apart.

"I was stationed where they did it. But it was already too late when I tried to stop them," Jamin told the bagman.

PBA Commissioner Noli Eala said the issue is behind the act would be promoted accordingly.

"The PBA will not let this pass. It was a clear violation of the league's policy which is to promote the brands of all the ballclubs and create sustainable among the teams," said Eala.

Meanwhile, Gladys Ann Miguel said held its Thursday Foundation in ngo Barangay Ginebra San Miguel Kings" at 6 p.m. on July 12 at the San Ignacio Shaw in Intramuros, Manila.

FG pleads for unity among sports leaders

ARROYO

By Mac Anthony Reyes

FIRST Gentleman Mike Arroyo didn't ask how many gold medals the country is capable of winning in the 2005 Southeast Asian Games.

Instead, he pleaded with the leaders of the different sports bodies yesterday to make peace and unite in the Games' cause.

"We can only do so much and achieve our goal in the SEA Games if we are united," Mr. Arroyo told officials of the Philippine Olympic Committee, Philippine Sports Commission and the national sports associations during a gathering at the Century Park Hotel in Manila.

Arroyo was obviously referring to the three-year-old word war between Philippine Olympic Committee president Jose "Peping" Cojuangco and Commissioner Jolly Gomez de Liaño.

The First Gentleman, who was also named the 2005 SEAG chief of mission, likewise used the occasion to appeal for an additional P35 million for the training of national athletes. He had earlier donated P5 million to the SEAG campaign.

For his part, Tourism Secretary Roberto Ongpauco, Philippine SEA Games Organizing Committee chairman, promised that the government will shoulder 75 percent of the P500 million budget for the Games.

REYES: Can he repeat this time?

SUSTAPANTE: Is this his year?

Bata Reyes leads Pinoy 'Dirty Dozen' in WPC

PROXIMITY and the Asian timetable favor Filipino cue artists when the World Pool Championships, which opens in Taipei today, moves closer to its shores and away from Cardiff, Wales, venue of its last five stagings.

Filipino entries, totaling 12 and who amusingly have been tagged the "Dirty Dozen," are certainly buoyed early by local Chinese-Taipei, which will provide 16 of the opponents in the 128-player single-elimination event.

Efren "Bata" Reyes, winner in Cardiff in 1999, tops a fearsome RP crew that includes automatic qualifier Francisco "Django" Bustamante, Lee Van Corteza, Warren Kiamco, Rubilen Gallego and the US-based Jean "Ndatabig" Nicolas, who's entered for the first time on the invitation of the hosts.

It could be the strongest RP team assembled for the WPC, but it being an individual tournament, RP promises little more than bragging or hoping to snatch each other out representing him the higher bracket in most stagings.

Gerrick Wells, 1999 dobo Games gold medalist, was the last to make it for RP joining qualifiers Rodolfo Luat, Marlon Manalo, Antonio Lining, Dennis Orcollo and Antonio Gabica.

Philippine fans Alex "The Lion" Pagulayan, runner-up to Thorsten Hohmann of Germany last year, represents Canada, his current home.

Since Reyes, known world-wide as The Magician, won the WPC in 1999 to find a memorable pool crown, only tournament—who lost the 2002 title battle to Ewa Laurance and he fought gamely despite the tragic death of his daughter...was the highest RP finisher in the annual tournament, the world's most prestigious 9-ball invitational event.

Archbishop of the US won the first staging of the WPC in 1990 in Sindelfingen Germany and repeated the event won in Las Vegas, Nevada.

Another American, Johnny Archer, won it in 1998, when the WPC was first held in Taipei in 1992. He repeated in Arlington Heights in the US in 1997.

Taipei's Chao Fong-pang has won the championships twice, in Germany in 1993 and in Cardiff in 2000.

Archer, by virtue of his crown from behind with over frustrations in Cardiff in 2000, is the only threetime titlist of the World classic now slated as the World Trade Center in Taipei. With a report from Maxine Bernardino

World pool matches 'live'

BILLIARDS fans will be treated to nine days of world class 9-ball action from the World Pool Championships coming from "live" via GMA Sports beginning today at 11:30 a.m. The matches scheduled will be aired at 2:30a.m. 3:30P Sports. The world-wide leader in sports coverage has lined up two weeks of high-caliber world billiards action where 32 billiards are vying for the top $50,000 purse and the total prize money of $100,000. Action on July 10 will be telecast at 11:30a.m. and 2:30 p.m. while matches from July 11 to July 17 will be aired at 11 a.m. and 8:30 p.m.

Golf Super Tour fires off at Villamor

By Manuel Carrillo

LIGUEÑA

ANTONIO Lascuña will have 108 holes to shoot for a second title this year. Raniel Rivera, the only other winner on the local Asian Tour this season, could have as few as 18 holes to prove himself.

The Boeing Republic National Highway Golf Super Tour tees off at the flat but ever-fated Villamor Airbase today with a clutch of tournament-hungry pros. Some included, trying to join Lascuña and Rivera who have been mashed into the new five-rounder.

Lascuña, winner of the Avida Country Club first, national, and Rivera, the Alex Cup champ, are among the laspedda vying in the sweet, island-hopping tournament.

But unlike Lascuña, Rivera will have to turn in a strong round today in order to make the trip to the Visayas and Mindanao and be in the hunt for the P600,000 championship purse.

Despite the break, though, with the Subic Cup, almost Villamor, a couple of months back, Rivera is not in the top 20 based on the Order of Merit.

Today's round will not only decide the 20 qualifiers but will also serve as the first 18-hole score to be carried over to the Malaysian Eljin Cup, Mission and Blue Water (Boracay), Marupara (Bacolod), Pueblo de Oro (Cagayan de Oro) and Del Monte (Dodolcost) legs.

The 40-man field rounds to Lipa on July 20 for a two-day shoot-out for eight to play at the Hideaways and Blue Water beyond the following day. The field rounds to Bacolod on the 28th before playing the fourth round at the Marupara.

The Pueblo de Oro course will be the site of the 36th round, while the final 18 will be played at the Jungle Del Monte course on the July 31.

The government's roll-out will all upstairs will be the team means of transport for the entire delegation and the organizing Philippine Footballers will take over of the players' expenses.

The other automatic qualifiers are Rafael Punzalan, Richard Bisbingo, Efren Penaflorida, Carlos Villanueva, Gaston Green, Angelo Que, Benjie Magada, Boy Signson, Elmer Salvador, Rafael Santos, Rodrigo Cuello, Danny delos Santos, Nicanor Cruz Abaño, Dennis Zarate, Jun Cruz, Peter Mikasa and Boy Alli.

New-look . . .

Photo supplied

some Rafael Tapias, Jojo Stan, Hakim Casalmoro, plus a bunch of blue-chip rookies are expected to join in.

The Manoreas will rely on Tee Almeda, Abby Santos and Bianca David.

Grizzly anticipated a Sunday's mammoth encounter between the three-time Eagles quarterback and coach Ed Sedi Cesario Montero. La Salle has never lost an opening game for 16 straight seasons.

Montero, last year's runner-up, will lose the formidable combination of Larry Fonseca, Lit Donato, Rudolfo Gil and Magnum Manalang. But he's assured coach Sandy Arespacochaga to ease the head coach.

La Salle, which lost to Ateneo in the Final four, will face Mike Cardona, who had a sensational 17.9 points per game last year, 6'03 Stanley of the San Joseph Gans, Arnely Gaya and Joseph Eta.

Undefeated runner Rana Pacheco is in his seventh year with the Archers. La Salle and three-time Eagles Jeff Cariaso former their teams.

Nino Tigers coach Oli Obinado will be banking on old reliables Jamal Masters, Mamor de Guzman and Christian Luanzon. The struggling Bulldogs, meanwhile, will count on veterans Jay Mendoza, who averaged 17.1 points last year.

SPORTSWATCH

Jao ready to bounce back

ROMAN Batangan—Outweighing Jaroslaw John Jao of Dhall Advance tries to regain his winning form when the third leg of the 2004 PCSO Grand Prix stirs up today and tomorrow at the Batangas Racing Circuit. Jao, eyeing an improved performance after a disappointing 10th place finish in Series, suffered scares of misfortune in the morning, paving the way for a two-race sweep by Hiroji Mendoza of Sapudidna in the Expert class. Jao still leads the overall standings with 72 points in this series sanctioned by the Philippine Motorcycle Sports and Safety Association (Romstar) and sponsored by the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office. Photo by Dodi Yuzon/Inquirer Philippines. Kenki Yamaha, Mitsubishi Motors and MBI Company. Randy Ortiz is just 11 points behind Jao with 61 points while Jaime Guillard Double Apple Racing is next as third with 54. Outstanding the top five are Mendoza (59) and Tab Alberto, last year's runner-up (56).

Haveline team seeks new glory

THE HAVELINE Racing Team aims to conquer the Batangas Racing Circuit (BRC) once when rookie Mikhail Ortiz, Jody Cooreng and Oscar Aguilar shoot for victories in the fifth and sixth rounds of the National Racing for Championship on Sunday. Cooreng quit Dr. Patrick Mandico-powered Honda Wigwith its team crashes in Round Six riding their respective division in Round 5. Cooreng, a four-time Driver of the Year, who is backed by Cullen Havelina and Gar Miguel Ruiz, was bumped from behind by a rival during the third round of the previous 9th class. Mandico topped Class I with a 9-point focus while also his only pilot, Aguilar, is in the 5th Place Class Pro-Am Class and the N.T. class 6 challenges, and his son Christian, who will be racing in his dad's old car.

LSGH hoops camp opens July 17

THE La Sal La Cometa Basketball Camp opens on July 17 with four sessions—Beginners I, Beginners II, intermediate and advance II camp. The program is designed for elementary and high school students aged 7-17. Non-Lasallite boys and girls are welcome to join. Sessions will be held on Saturday mornings and afternoons at the LSGH gym. All camp trainers, aided of teaching youngsters, are from the La Salle Greenhills basketball program coaches and players. Interested parties, among others, bank to coach Rhumpenyahn or the Prado Magpale this year and the Mia Senal Basketeers of the Philippine National Police. For inquiries, call Lea at 7237111 or 7215555 local 718.

GOLF READ

V'Golf, the first locally published glossy golf magazine, was launched recently at cocktails held at the Grand Ballroom of the New World Renaissance Hotel. Photo shows Ramolo Negrito (left), president of the Professional Golfers Association of the Philippines, receiving the first copy of V'Golf from Dan Dimayuga, president of V-Sport Publications Inc., publisher of the magazine.

Shooting under fire

TO RISE is a booming year in shooting. By shooting, I mean the Philippine Rifle and Shooting Association (PRSA) headed by Art Macapagal, the former Olympian himself and half-brother of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

My baptism in the indefatigable Malvarite "Vi" Dalandan, until Art hurried that we

"No, Art did not challenge anyone to a gun duel," said Vi. "But you like that. Never. What he did was to challenge the countermeasures to produce a paper asking him to resign."

How come it had come to that?

It started with a meeting of some PRSA officers on June 27, with the majority of rifle and pistol shooters in attendance. A heated argument resulted in unconstitutional flying fists, as in the PBA's, under the, allegedly not having a program of action for the 2005 SEA Games, and having a private funding for shooters preparing for the Games and not coming up with a concrete development program for the association, among others.

Vi said Art announced by saying the SEAGs job is to narrowly "provide the venue for the 2004 Games and create a system for qualifying."

At present, the PRSA will hold a two-day qualifying tournament today and tomorrow at the Port Bonifacio shooting range. The event is part of the PRSA's selection process to determine our shooters for next year's SEA Games.

But Vi said it is almost next to impossible for someone to win a slot in the air rifle team.

"The standard for that is the gold medal in the 2003 SEA Games in Hanoi," said Vi. "The score for that gold is 598 out of a perfect 600. And the 598 record there is just 556."

Under Art Macapagal's watch that began in 2000, the country has won four gold medals in the SEA Games...[illegible] in the 2001 Kuala Lumpur Games and 1 last year in Hanoi. In the Asian Games in 2002, we won a silver through Andrew Montero, a feat that earned for Andrew a whole year in the Armed Forces.

The reason our seven-only one gold last year in Hanoi was many of our good shooters had quit. Maybe, in protest. Art's style of governance?

"They said they don't like Art Macapagal's autocratic style," said Vi.

This year is different from [illegible]. Usually, the election, done every four years, is held during the Olympic year.

But this early, there is a demand for Art to leave the scene. When confronted by it on June 27, Art, according to Vi, shot back: "Make a petition, sign it and I will resign."

Already, as of last morning, 31 of 35 supposed rifle and pistol shooters have signed the petition demanding Art's resignation. Not only Art, but everything the out-set men were members from the shotgun, practical and more. [illegible] of the PRSA.

Still, if and when the petition is finally submitted, will Art Macapagal honor his word and resign?

I have to say this for Art Macapagal who made a similar pledge a while back: He would not run for president in the May 10, 2004 polls. He broke her vow and she is now our president, sworn to serve for the short-of-six years on June 30.

Didn't I tell you Ike Arroyo is the ace of Art Macapagal?

Don't look at me like that, Vi.

SPECTATOR
Al S. Wenkoczie

PHOTOBOOK. No one is more deserving than Eggie Apostol to receive the first Gawad Plaridel Award for Journalism from DPCI-Ateneo at the Hyatt last weekend. Eggie, the founding chair of the Philippine Daily Inquirer in 1985 and the Pinoy Times more than a decade later, deserved also honor more effectively Magsaysay Award for Journalism, I wonder why she hasn't been honored that award yet. But knowing her, she couldn't care less. "Yes as long as I can still dance the samba and the boogie, I'm happy," she told me in Spanish. She says Eggie, her 7th year-old legs still so "fantastic" as ever. Not for anything but if it weren't for Eggie, I could be in Mr. Macapagal's now planning campaign. Eggie it was who gave me not only the right courage to say no to Marcos but also the most politically correct reason why the business is No. 1. For a newspaper to become successful, leave the editor alone."

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OPINION

[publication info, boilerplate and boards]

Pull out

WHAT are we doing in Iraq anyway? The 4,000 or so Filipinos working as cooks and drivers may be there because of reconstruction's employment opportunities, but the 91 soldiers and policemen serving with the US-led coalition forces?

They are there because of the Arroyo administration's voluntary membership in the so-called Coalition of the Willing.

EDITORIAL Any attempt by Malacañang or the Department of Foreign Affairs to justify our modest military presence in Iraq as a means of supporting the international community at large must be rejected for what it is: nonsense. We are in Iraq because the Arroyo administration supported the US-led invasion. The government may have paid precious lip service to United Nations resolutions before the invasion, but when push came to shove, it chose unilateral American assertiveness over collegial UN exertion.

This is the reality in which, with a terrible suddenness, the nation has turned its attention to the fate of a Filipino truck driver working for a Saudi Arabian firm doing business in Iraq. The other day, Angelo de la Cruz was taken hostage in or near the city of Fallujja, ground zero of the Iraqi insurgency.

Fallujja has seen some of the fiercest fighting in Iraq since US President George W. Bush landed on an aircraft carrier to declare the war mission gratifyingly accomplished. But the recent US decision to withdraw from Fallujja has turned the city into a "safe haven" (in the words of the former top American general in Iraq) for terrorists and insurgents. It has also offered the insurgency, quite literally, a rallying point.

Whether the Iraqi insurgents can be said to follow a consistent strategy remains arguable, but the hostage-taking tactic can be easily understood: They want to sap the will of both the American public and the international community, by waging a war of attrition against both US troops and foreign workers. The war will last until the insurgents run out of hostages.

De la Cruz's hostage-takers, the obscure Khaled Bin Walid Brigade, has threatened to behead him if the Philippines does not pull its troops out within 72 hours. It cannot be an idle threat; Iraqi insurgents have taken dozens of foreign hostages since April, killing an Italian (Fabrizio Quattrocchi), an American (Nicholas Berg), and a South Korean (Kim Sun Il). The last two were decapitated.

The hostage-taking came at a critical time. The Philippine contingent's once of duty ends on Aug. 20, and the Arroyo administration had not yet decided whether to extend it or bring the troops home.

Now the administration is under the gun. It will be harder to invite comparisons with the treacherous of the South Korean and Japanese governments. South Korea did not only refuse to withdraw its 600 troops in Iraq after their hostage was killed, it decided to send an additional 3,000 soldiers. Japan, which suffered a hostage-taking crisis last April, also did not order a pullout. (The three Japanese hostages were released four days after their deadline.)

But the issue is not about steadfastness. It is about the national interest.

In a word, we were duped into supporting the US-led war. The national interest requires that we make amends for our naiveté, and demand an explanation and better behavior from not only the United States.

To date, not a single weapon of mass destruction has been found in Iraq. Not a single piece of substantial evidence has been found to positively connect the regime of the brutal dictator Saddam Hussein with the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

On the other hand, proof that the United States launched the invasion on less-than-solid evidence has accumulated. The US commission investigating the Sept. 11 attacks, for instance, has found many disturbing discrepancies in the accounts of the various American intelligence agencies, leading media organizations have issued dramatic mea culpas for their pre-war coverage, which allowed the cowboys in the White House to gather an Iraqi invasion posse without too much resistance.

The time has come to stand tall in the community of nations. Let's admit we were mistaken in accepting the US view, and withdraw our troops. Then, like the Japanese, negotiate with the insurgents to spare the life of one more innocent abroad.

Militarization of the Cabinet

SEPARATE OPINION

Sagguni A. Cruz

THE CONSTITUTION provides clear "civilian supremacy is, at all times, supreme over the military." Yet, its executive, certain authority, in violating the President of the Philippines as commander in chief of all the armed forces, is keen, if not at least careful, of the military.

It was not so during the early days of the Republic, when the generals were more players in the scheme of the government and stayed there. They did not penetrate, much less fill, duty domains. They did not involve themselves in political matters but confined themselves to implementing the will of the President and Congress. They were acutely obedient as the orders of the Supreme Court.

Things changed abruptly when Marcos declared martial law with the support of the armed forces. The military became a state, and in the desperation. The state of emergency gave subjugation automatic unconstitutional but unchallenged power. The military began to consume a new element in the New Society and citizens' prominence over the civilian, outright orders, forbidding the latter, the courts, and even the opposition. These were effectively instituted through the barrel of the gun.

The unbalanced situation of the armed forces was also evident in the physical appurtenances of their camps and facilities. Compared to dwellers the neglect of the condition of fort Bonifacio and Nichols Air Base before martial law the was amazed by their change later. The martial roads were suddenly paved and asphalted. New equipment and innovative walls were constructed. The camps achieved a neat and neon security look.

The rest of the country, including Metro Manila, did not enjoy similar concern. In fact, the dust areas widened, civilian access to mainted unattended, and the streets metropolis deteriorated.

It was common then to see the family members of military's personnel using government-owned vehicles for non-official purposes, like bringing the wives to parties and their children to school. Generals enjoyed personal privileges for private mail. Complaints, if they were filed, were ignored. In the military area immune by order of Malacañang.

Altering the atmosphere by the military was the Supreme Court, partly because of its own identity. The armed forces had its ethos to maintain rights because the judiciary was too apparent enough to perceive claims. The armed fashion and their colonels armed bars among the enemies of the martial law regime. The highest court in the land heavily lifted a finger to review and martial law.

It is also noteworthy case, the military arrested three lawyers, who were to the Supreme Court to relief on habeas corpus. The Supreme Court ordered their release to the custody of their counsel, former Chief Justice Roberto Concepcion and retired Justice JBL Reyes. The military appeared this order from the high Tribunal. It said it was bound to obey not the high Tribunal but Marcos, who had ordered the lawyer's detention.

Perge of resurgence finally gripped the armed forces when it helped to depose the discredited despot in 1986. Soon enough, its past excesses were condoned, but they were still remembered to raise red flare of their resurrection. This is why the administration sometimes even seem to tread with kid gloves less it may to ugly head again.

That may be, sometimes since more, actions are not manifest, such the growing militarization of our civilian government. Despite the constitutional principle in Art. II., Sec. 3, we may find ourselves involved in or before by the institutional presence of active military men in the new Republic. The commander in chief herself and the use of officer-duties may be under to confidence and influence.

Secretary Jesse Cosa has been vigilant in the Department of Interior and Local Government by Gen. Angelo Reyes, who will join Gen. Hermogenes Ermita of the Department of National Defense and Gen. Leonardo Mendoza of the Department of Transportation and Communication. And there are other military men in line. The important civilian agencies in the executive department who are getting it an extraordinary mental appearances and powers.

Among those are Generals Victor Maps, Cesilio Perello, Domingo Sears, Adalberto Pay, Roberto Lastimoso, Diomedio Villanueva, Edgardo Cassman, Lucio Cardenas, Reynaldo Alpasco, Nestor Santiago, Feliciano Garcia, as well as Eduardo Buenaga, Guillermo Pacheco, Edgardo Abenina, Miguel Coronel, Reynaldo Berroya and Victor Corpus.

Despite their apparently growing [illegible] competence, I suppose that there are attributes with regard of two superior abilities who are still their present positions in keeping with the constitutional objective of maintaining civilian supremacy supreme over the military. Having retired from their military days, soldiers should stay retired with their pensions instead of occupying positions for which civilians are available and more qualified.

What's the point of retiring soldiers when they can reappear later with attributes for civilian jobs? The President should keep the military in its place as before instead of treating it with the special deference it does not deserve in our republican government.

Looking at the bright side

GET REAL

Isabel Caillon-Montreal

SUCCESS has been defined as getting what you want, while happiness is wanting what you get.

Philip Gonzalez Moyer is both successful and happy, and is on top list of most admired persons. A woman of great faith, as well as a business dynamo, she has overcome adversity by turning them into opportunities. Her story gives hope to the depressed and hate to the cynical.

Elizabeth Hurley famously said of Estee in the other hunger in the dark clouds which I see hovering over the country as a result of the disarming, if not frightening, fire storm of the President who seems to be paying back individuals behind for election favors or election promises, rather than paying back all of the people who seem to be taking the low road instead of the high.

Ruby insists that naively pointing to the dark clouds and speculating things have gotten worse. They create negative vibes affecting the people causing discouragement and loss of hope, making the atmosphere even more gloomy. So no positive, she says, is encouraging.

I humbly caution are any silver lining in the courage to turn unconscious change down the throats of people, and capitalizing their unfamiliarity with different forms of governance by unchecking all kinds of miseries proven to a non-commission and a parliamentary government. Hardliners can be anything minimally positive in the reappointment of their true character, commitment where partisan behavior (and rumored shooting effects) once a public mandate and demonstrating in the Executive itself. Or in substituting competent people with less competent ones with more political clout. Or in pursuing revenue raising measures that are unwise, or send and found wanting, or will result in further inequities in the tax burden.

So, without allowing feminine don't forget to look at your rubbing off on me, I still want on the road to positivism by pointing out that some of the dark clouds other people see aren't as dark as they are made out to be.

Some think that Armageddon is just around the corner, because GMA showed and the real stature of her people was PR; or it is just a matter of time (and ghosting) before she is removed by another people power movement or some military administration. My not-so-dark view: GMA does have the numbers of the people [illegible] the people know (c) because she would have won over PR3 votes if all 1,200 senators that the opposition suspect of being unopposed with votes counted in favor.

Others break that the Philippine economy is in crisis. Any one's guess, not mine. Or see you saying: The economy is not in crisis, as the result of the SSGB, growing quite robustly. Whether that is because of, or in spite of, GMA it boosts the point.

Others see failure: GMA cannot possibly survive the billion jobs in six years (she thinks long-time). My view: Jesus obviously wasn't trained or her employment-creating record in the past three years (1.25 million new jobs a year on the average). Six million is easy, though 10 million is a greater matter, but that's another [illegible].

Then there is the charge that she is foreign in and kissing our people for the wrong reasons. The positive Filipino says: I agree. But let us count our blessings in the many people [illegible] who refuse to be [illegible] and are not counted. A partial list of those I consider both competent and upright: Delia Albert as foreign affairs, Emilia Boncodin as budget, Simeon Rio, Tomas de Jesus, Alberto Romulo as secretaries, economy, and Jose Maria Puyat as agrarian reform, the latter they can stand up to their boss if not the boss.

Corruption: guns on unchecked, if not as a [illegible] Philippine Menace (sic). Only one [illegible] after the dismissal by the Ombudsman of a public works undersecretary and a high rank[illegible] brought to the Bureau of Internal Revenue for hiding lifestyle checks. This following the dismissal of a high ranking customs official, also for having assets beyond what she could reasonably have obtained from her salaries. It would have been a stronger message, of course, if the government were all out to uncover the illegally acquired assets and to recover ill-gotten properties—but one step at a time, right?)

And along this positive path, in lieu of negative comments about the 10 no monetary [illegible] posed by the "Economic Managers Group" as the reasons for banning fiesta cock fights, let me put on the table some alternatives which do not require new legislation (because they are already laws, but only saved on the [illegible] implementation). Some suggestions are courtesy of my expert banker's expertise, who is worth at least 10 of the daily experts.

One, impose ceilings on deductions using industry benchmarks. Two, collect the international income tax, and the Bingo benefits on [illegible] and audit. Three, counter the bombing of corporations and not ex[illegible] high-priced products are subject to high tax rates using random checks. (Include NGOs on the audit trail), if the bases stamps cannot be used. Four, stop leakages from the [illegible] withholding income taxes, e.g. duty and tax free importations by TV and radio stations in exchange for government advertisements. Five, eliminate discretion in determining import excises by using them on the basis of [illegible] Six, get the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (the banking department of finance) to do banks to ensure that tax on interest income is withheld. Seven, collect value-added tax from prepaid telephone cards/services. Eight, develop a database on professionals/self-employed individuals and their earnings/wages of the telephone directory and check if they paid their taxes.

I hope you give me a passing grade for my look at the bright side exercise, Ruby.

JDV challenges Senate

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cassayan

SPEAKER Jose de Venecia denies the gauntlet set by Senate president Franklin Drilon and some senators that the Quezon City congressman be shorted from the budget for his opposition to the pork barrel. He can attend to urgent financial problems of the country. JDV argued that Congress has chosen from the experts surrounding that genre a decade ago to be the "most powerful" in the region. He has a point. Even the same agency arsenals say fiscal crisis, and in last-minute finance members are now saying that they can mark for five days each week just to accommodate the Senate.

With this, the chance "is calling the farmer's bluff," as one lawmaker put it. It's a challenge that the Senate will find hard to ignore, as the ongoing roadshow of the Pro people's anti-smoke or-booze crusade up working on the Charter.

Among the fiscal reform measures this could be debated in Congress during these 100 days, according to Speaker de Venecia, are those that will double from the present tax to grave income tax; the excise taxes on tobacco and alcoholic beverages and on petroleum products; changing the system of collection computation from value-added tax to a simplified one; hiking the VAT from 10 percent to 12 percent; enacting the road users' tax; and collecting a tax amount. Basically, these revenue measures will yield P120 billion in new taxes up to the administration's Economic Management Group (EMG), which has been expanded with the inclusion of Sen. Ralph Recto, Albay Rep. Joey Salceda and Senate President Drilon to formulate their "Team Alumni" to supervise the galvanized action.

Stalling measures for the cash-strapped government is the subject hopping casino mogs these days, edging out of the frenzy mega-rich like stocks like the Toyota Century Bank's Solomon Strobe and Agriculture Secretary Tito Lumawig getting next to 50% administrator Arthur Yap. Many of the issues of the EMG are attributed to a relatively less known face in the financial block. Salceda, who has kept a low profile since he chose to "step up" his colleagues in the House, as Budget Secretary Drilon from talks put it. Salceda quipped in this columnist that he also sought to drive home to the many foreign investment bankers now in town, especially the investing, that Drilon's presidency, that it is serious in maintaining reforms.

Salceda's "checking" proposal was also the first blow out of the House, and the Senate, increasing to about P20 billion (run by investigated in the proposed national budget for 2005 along the 10 percent proposal for private offices and President Macapagal-Arroyo. Meanwhile, the Senate's Drilon should put the money into the construction of school houses and health facilities and job promoting economic renewal of the armed nursing check. Let the fiscal reform measures be the priority which are designed for voters' final report on their economic indicator than the push of it.

The Manila Times, in an editorial yesterday, opined that Salceda "should immediately go to the Philippine Stock Exchange and Congress, to do his business economics and to the general public."

This is true, especially since he has a tendency to speak in terms more appropriate to investment bankers, which he was for some years. Actually, he says with a laugh, "I felt that if I cannot convince my colleagues, I'll not confuse them."

* * *

A management engineering cum laude graduate of the mission de Manila, where one of his teachers was Dr. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, and a topnotcher of the Asian Institute of Management's PhD program in 1990, Salceda served as congressional fellow to Speaker Ramon Mitra and later chief of staff of Sen. Ramon Bong Revilla. He joined the staff of the Social Security System (SSS) in 1992, where he was noted by Jose Mesina's surveys to be amateur and, here economists for five years. In 1998, Salceda ran for Congress and won in the first try. He is said to be the candidate of GMA for chair of the House appropriations committee, against Commuters list Rep. Antonio Sanchez, who for two terms was also GMA's ally. Salceda is known as "inherited" from his late father Rep. Rolando Salceda Sr., and is said to be GMA's candidate. "We have a friendly rivalry," Salceda says of his fellow Albay solon. "I am not the candidate that sure to Pampanga for native Albay gave the biggest margin to GMA in Luzon.

* * *

High-powered impresario Bob Stow-Tagle has surrendered to doing the impossible: dragging lawmaker from the newsrooms and on to the stage to sing, dance and perhaps act like The performers from the months, talk to: Sen. Herman Dakey, Daddy Legarda, Rep. Mikey Arroyo, Sen. Richard Gordon, Senator Sarmiento and many others, said he focused in a concert at the Manila Hotel's Tanay Pavilion on this Friday, July 16, at 7 p.m. for the benefit of the Philippine Red Cross. Appearing in special guest will be the "Three Tenors" from the Lower Chamber: Angelo Reyes, recently resigned Joey Lina and Bayani Fernando, acting Justice Secretary Hilario Davide Jr. and Sen. Ralph Recto, former Finance secretary. Tickets available at the Manila Hotel or call Bob Tagle at 911-5555 or 0917-8004400.

Social capital

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

OTHERHAND is the quite typical breed of organizing Social Welfare Secretary Dinky Soliman. "My solution is simple. Kilusan wants the IDPES? Then let them take over the IDPES! Let them run all the dole-out programs! Let them run the Pantawid Pamilya! Let them run the Bantay Bata! Let them run the Bantay Bata! Let them run the Bantay Bata

Sad fate of Dinky and 'delicadeza'

THE SIGNATURE of Gonzalo "Dinky" Soliman from the Cabinet Hotline numbered the credibility of the Arroyo administration. Soliman is among the five government officials whom the people held high as a subject of public service. His departure from the Cabinet cements a dark, cold void which "Kalayaan" Vice President Noli de Castro expects to fill in.

I have long maintained that Filipino politicians and government officials suffer from bad timing and insensitivity. It does not take a college degree to read numerous blatant "for sheetal brother jamong," from the head of the Department of Interior and Local Governments himself. The Free Constitution declares that he will maintain a low profile, then holds a birthday bash for himself, never mind that in hosting sumptuous feasts while the country is busily reeling in typhoons and floods, he is only following the footsteps of his predecessor, Angelo Reyes, who was also fond of celebrating his birthday in grand style.

Delicadeza is readily invoked against opponents and critics but is hardly practiced in administration circles. In Honduras, along with the "sword of honor" has gone down the chute.

—RODOLFO B. MENDOZA, Jr.
jojomd33@pldtdsl.net

SSS-BDO deal will show the kind of President GMA is

AS a member of the Social Security System, I thank the Philippine Association of Retired Persons (PARP) for stopping the sale of SSS stocks to the Equitable PCIBank to finance the Tax Credit Bond. The sale would have resulted in a P7.4 billion loss for the SSS.

This there were other issues calling on but the stocks in private higher than the purchase price of Bonar de Oro (BDO) should have prompted the SSS management to sell the stocks through a public bidding—that is, if it were really thinking of the welfare of its members. This it did, not previous SSS presidents Gonzalo delaRosa said the SSS commissioners do not have the best interest of SSS members in their minds.

President Macapagal-Arroyo should follow Jojo Flor and the commissioners for approving the sound lot of corporate. And now are thinking of Chavez charge. I think what the whole country needs is a decisive change.

Delicadeza is readily invoked against opponents and critics but is hardly practiced in administration circles. In Honduras, along with the "sword of honor" has gone down the chute.

—RODOLFO B. MENDOZA, Jr.
jojomd33@pldtdsl.net

LETTERS

Base tax on gross income

BA Dream Valenzia must be running in his genie display of women's because a gas proposed of borrowed gross income unless when our point it is now being pressed by the administration of President Macapagal-Arroyo. Under this scheme, the decisions of the revenue officer considering the exit audit will be grossly consistent, if not totally ethics zero.

I think we can count on the immediate implementation of the new tax scheme because the administration controls both Houses of Congress.

—PAUL B. ROMUS,
SBLA Court, Mahinday, Muntinlupa City

Soliman: Decision to resign reached after talk with GMA

THIS is to express my dismay over the "I feel betrayed" banner of the July 7 Inquirer story. I think the headline—coupled with the first sentence in the report stating that "Social Welfare Secretary Corazon 'Dinky' Soliman was driven from office by betrayal"—misrepresents the resignation as forced and without necessity.

However, I also would like to express my appreciation for the Inquirer editorial titled "Resignations" (PDI, 7/7/06), which I think carried a very timely message that the government ought to consider.

I understand and respect the editorial prerogative of accompany to report events. I have always maintained my non-relationship with the media, including the Inquirer. That is the reason why I am disappointed with the newspaper's banner headline, which is purportedly a direct quotation from me but actually a distortion of what I actually said.

The truth of the matter is, I was not "driven from office by betrayal." I decided to resign after I made all our discussing the matter openly with the President in the belief that it was for the best interest of the country. I am making myself accountable to the media precisely to clarify my decision and the circumstances which led to it.

My decision to resign was made to support the President's political commitment to the Tax Executive and it was arrived at through a consensus.

It was made in response the Vice President's overwhelming mandate from the people and to give the President a free hand in reorganizing her Cabinet to ensure the fulfillment of the 10-Point Agenda for the people.

As I said during the press conference, the interest of the public and the bureaucracy is bigger than my ego. I remain a supporter of the President and her reform programs. I believe that the Vice President will do a good job as the DSWD. I trust that the DSWD is among the strongest, most professional and dedicated government agencies, and it will continue to perform as mandate to serve under any administration. Please, let us not cast shame where there is none.

—CORAZON SOLIMAN-DOLORFINO,
secretary,
Department of Social Welfare and Development,
Batasan Pambansa Complex, Constitution Hills, QC

Forget politics, prioritize competence

WE were alarmed, after reading the speculation story titled "Lorenzo's out, then here to over to agriculture" (PDI, 7/5/06) that Agriculture Secretary Luis P. Lorenzo may be on the way out. This is totally unsupported to us in the agricultural sector, which is not only composed of the rice farming but also the fishing and hog raising industries.

Lorenzo's stewardship in the Department of Agriculture for the last 18 months, as well as his earlier stint as presidential adviser on job generation, for his already created more than a million jobs in agro-sector, has been monumental. The cut-politics or smart jobs President Macapagal-Arroyo committed to generate in the next six (6) would depend mainly on agriculture and productivity.

His achievements during his short stint in government speak volumes for Lorenzo and are his most impressive credentials. To replace him now would be like changing horses in midstream, something that has proven itself in the course of history to be extremely prejudicial to those who dared to do so.

It is time for all our leaders to forget politics and focus on good governance. Otherwise, the current cannot rise from the storms to it aimed to.

—ESTELITO B. AQUINO,
spokesperson,
Agro-Industrial Workers Association for Rural Development, Quezon Vegan, Rizal Sur

Thorough research would have revealed real St. Josemaria

I WOULD like to make a necessary correction to the "Grave documents" column of Jesus Gallardo, PDI, 7/5/06, which placed in doubt the great accomplishments and sanctity of St. Josemaria Escriva by quoting Dan Brown's novel, "The Da Vinci Code."

I suggest that writers exercise their profession more responsibly by thoroughly doing research before using superiors on any group or person in their articles. St. Josemaria Escriva, founder of Opus Dei, was canonized by Pope Holiness John Paul II on Oct. 6, 2002.

I believe, like the many other people wounded by his writings, that in his fictional St. Josemaria consciously preached holiness through his books, other writings and the work of his followers.

Let me end this by quoting from the great Vicar of Christ, John Paul II:

"St. Josemaria was chosen by the Lord to proclaim the universal call to holiness and to embrace this everyday life, an extraordinary mystery, as a path towards holiness. It could be said that he was the saint of the ordinary. He was really convinced that the ordinary lives with an outlook of faith, overflowing often on opportunity for a meeting with God, encountering Jesus Christ in ordinary events."

—EVA B. BELLICIOSO,
jesalbe@hotmail.com

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Writers of letters to the editor are requested to include their complete address and telephone or pager number or e-mail address for verification purposes. The Inquirer will not publish any letter unless such information is supplied.

GMA's student named agriculture secretary

SAP Pimentel

LORENZO: 'A bigger role'

[illegible] undertakings at the Department of Agriculture—Yap and Agriculture Undersecretary Gene Iñiguez.

"It's not a planned resignation. If one sees it as resignation and steps there, it is grossly unfair," Lorenzo told a Malacañang press briefing.

When asked at another press conference if he was pressured into resigning, Lorenzo replied: "It's difficult to explain that because pressure is relative. For me it's all about a professional relationship, a friendship that transcends pressure, logic and emotions."

Asked again if Ms Arroyo asked them to give up his post, Lorenzo, after a brief pause, answered: "For a bigger job, yes. I guess you have to take it within the context of the bigger job and not in the context of giving up DA."

Never a contender

Drilon, in a statement, said that he was never a contender for the agriculture position.

"I have neither lobbied Malacañang nor have I asked my brother, Senate President Franklin Drilon, for an appointment to the top DA post," Drilon said.

Lorenzo, whose resignation would take effect on Aug. 15, said he had a talk with Ms Arroyo Thursday and it was then that he finally agreed to accept a "bigger challenge" of ensuring that farmers and fishermen get access to sufficient and low-cost credit.

Ms Arroyo had apparently already laid the groundwork for his departure from the DA when she signed Executive Order No. 163 reorganizing the L&P board last July 1, which would allow her to name her representative as chair with the incumbent chair, Finance Secretary Juanita Amatong, remaining as an ex-officio member.

Lorenzo said that he felt no bitterness over Ms Arroyo's decision to get a new team at the DA despite steering the agriculture sector to its most productive years in more than a decade.

'I've done more than enough'

"Why should I be disappointed? All of us in the Cabinet go through the experience because we know this is not a permanent thing. Rightly or wrongly, I was part of the game," Lorenzo said.

In an interview with the [illegible] station network here, Lorenzo said he cried twice when he faced media as announcer he was leaving DA because he remembered how media had helped him as agriculture secretary and how his department was able to help farmers and fishermen.

Fast learner

Lorenzo said he recommended Yap for the job because he was a "fast learner" after having worked with him since his appointment as DA chief in December 2002.

"If you have asked to do a little bit more, mentoring [with him], given that I can help him with my experience," Lorenzo said.

Yap, whose family is into real estate and paint manufacturing, was initially tapped by the President to head the Philippine International Trading Corp., in August 2001. He was assigned to the SEA in October 2002, when he resigned [illegible] with Anthony Abad, another student of the President.

Lorenzo said he was looking forward to working with Yap because his work in the Landbank and Quedancor up would overlap with the DA. Lorenzo said Yap was likely to be replaced by someone [illegible] officers at the SEA.

Lorenzo claimed he received 15,000 text messages from friends and supporters after they learned of his resignation.

Richest of them all

"They are concerned about policy within the department because it will not be [illegible] signing on policy. But I have enough confidence in [Yap]. So will scientific [illegible] to the benefit of the sector," Lorenzo said.

Lorenzo, the richest among the President's men and women, was the third Cabinet Secretary to resign since Ms Arroyo began her [illegible] year.

Lorenzo's resignation has intensified rumors of more Cabinet changes in the offing, involving Tourism Secretary Roberto Pagdanganan (likely to be replaced by Masbate Gov. Jesse Kho), President John Henrik Gregorio) and Foreign Secretary Delia Albert.

Presidential spokesperson Ignacio Bunye refused to comment on the Cabinet reshuffle, saying that all [illegible] "casual emphasis that serve us today to-day basis."

In an earlier press conference

at the DA's head office, the 47-year-old Lorenzo cited [illegible] Ms Arroyo his many accomplishments in his three-page farewell message.

He said he was resigning "to move on to something bigger and more important for the President and the nation at this time."

'An unblemished record'

"Contrary to speculations that I am being eased out of the [illegible] Cabinet, the President has asked me to continue serving her administration," he said.

"My service, however, will take on a different form as I will be embarking on a higher mission," he said.

"I leave with an unblemished record, a clean conscience, and the legacy of achieving an 8.2 percent growth in the first quarter of this year, the highest for the agriculture sector in 15 years," he added.

He commissioned that he was leaving the Cabinet also came a month after he was named co-respondent in a plunder complaint filed at the Ombudsman by former Sulu-Basilan Governor Wadi Chavez, who cited Lorenzo's supposed role in an alleged misuse of almost P1 billion in public funds for Ms Arroyo's election campaign. Lorenzo has denied the allegation.

In an open forum, Lorenzo brushed aside speculation that his exit was meant to allow Ms Arroyo to pay off political debts from her recent election campaign.

He maintained that he accepted the L&P chairmanship "as a challenge" to help turn rural folk away of the land's under-[illegible] and help fulfill the President's inaugural pledge to create six to 10 million jobs in the next six years.

Promotion

Lorenzo made it sound like he was being promoted, saying he had accepted a "bigger role" as chair of the L&P.

The Palace insisted Lorenzo was not the family-owned Lapanday Foods Corp., a major banana exporter, that later merged a Del Monte pineapple plantation in Mindanao before joining the President's team in 2001.

In a statement, Yap said: "It's with deep humility that I answer the President' call to join her Cabinet as secretary of agriculture. I accept this challenge with a deep awareness of the high expectations which the and our people have for this department."

DOH: Give condoms a chance

Transcript [illegible]

Health Secretary Manuel Dayrit, "and the country is growing by almost two million every year."

Isn't it about time Filipino couples gave condoms a chance? After all, soldiers are easier to use and the most cost-efficient among contraceptives.

"It's no longer just a question of family planning. Population management will make sure the population is well-provided for in terms of education, health care and jobs," Dayrit told reporters yesterday in a press conference at the Bayview Hotel in Manila.

July 11 is World Population Day and the health secretary had a lot to say about the country's unbridled population growth and the government's rational contraceptive to healthy and responsible procreation. He also launched the health department's "Bright Child" challenge.

"The goal is to emphasize responsible, or antenatal [illegible] children. Get healthy kids," he said. "The challenge for the Filipino couple is to make sure that every child they bring into this world is bright."

Simply put, mommy, daddy and junior, too, would face better if they prepared for parenthood.

Providing climate

"The national government would provide a climate in people are encouraged to actually live a life of responsible parenting," Dayrit said.

This climate, he explained, is one where parents would make an informed choice of when to have a child and how many.

Local governments, who have the "finger on the pupils... that," would provide health services and eliminate couples on responsible parenthood as a community level.

Marikina example

In Marikina for instance, the health workers educate couples "on the consequences of having a family," said Mayor Bienvenido Fernando.

"We tell them that having a family costs money. It's expensive to give birth. It's not cheap to bring up kids—you have to feed them, buy them clothes, toys, send them to school. It's something couples have to prepare for," she said.

Women in Marikina are thus engaged in city-organized, part-time work. Such a strategy, the mayor added, keeps the women busy and gives them extra income. Consequently, the families are smaller, with at most...three kids.

Community workers

Like the health department's door-to-door immunization campaigns in the past, community workers from the Church, the Department of Education, and the Department of Social Welfare and Development would be tapped to help promote the "bright child" challenge.

Ultimately, the choice to have children or not, bright or bright-, rests on the parents.

Backers call moratorium on Charter change

Transcript [illegible]

the House could approve all the necessary revenue measures in 130 days.

At the end of this period, however, he said the two chambers should be asked to convene themselves into a constituent assembly that would enact amendments to the Constitution.

De Venecia also claimed that President Arroyo had made a commitment to carry out the shift to a parliamentary federal system during her term and non-after 2010.

GMA's promise

He said the President made this commitment at a Malacañang caucus late Thursday attended by 238 national and regional leaders of the ruling Lakas-CMD who all agreed to support the President's 10-point national and economic agenda for the next six years.

"She has declared...She has made a solemn, sacrosanct commitment," De Venecia said at a press conference yesterday.

Presidential spokesperson Ignacio Bunye could not confirm the disclosure made by De Venecia.

"The President's stance on the issue is that she will call the Lotte [the Legislative-Executive Development Advisory Council] to consider the manner and timing of Charter change. It has not changed," Bunye said.

Asked if Ms Arroyo had also agreed to the Speaker's earlier suggestion that she serve as concurrent President and Prime Minister until 2010, De Venecia said that the discussion did not touch on that point.

There have been suggestions that the President step down in 2007 to pave the way for a shift to a parliamentary system, or serve as concurrent President and Prime Minister until the end of her term in 2010.

Confusing signals

The Speaker's statements only added to the confusing signals that Malacañang has been sending out on Ms Arroyo's position on the issue of Charter change, particularly on how it will affect her plan to run for reelection.

Ganda Aklan, the presidential adviser on constitutional reforms, said on Wednesday he did not believe the President would be agreeable to merging Houses or to amending her term.

He said the President wanted to serve out the full six years of her term now of office on the one implement her programs which he said were "urgently needed" by the people.

Drilon's statements echoed remarks that other Palace officials and the President herself made on July 1 that she wanted to leave as her legacy a parliamentary federal system that is in place at the end of her term.

The July 1 statement was seen as a tactic by Ms Arroyo who made an election promise that she would agree to step down in 2007 to pave the way for a change in the system of government.

De Venecia's disclosure about the President's expressed commitment made at the caucus would seem to place Ms Arroyo's position on Charter change back to where it was during the election campaign.

Mode of change

Asked whether Charter change would be done through either a constitutional convention, which Malacañang prefers, or a constituent assembly which the House wants, De Venecia said the President "will leave that to Congress."

He however stood that even the President herself agreed that a shift to a parliamentary federal system would help in the solution to the country's financial problems.

Reminded that senators, particularly Senate President Franklin Drilon, have consistently opposed Charter change, De Venecia said: "That is one my personal challenge to all political parties."

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Visayas Bureau

Mindanao Bureau

C. Mindanao employers express willingness to raise daily wages

COTABATO CITY—The management sector in Central Mindanao is not reluctant to adjust wages of workers according to a ranking official of the Regional Wages and Productivity Board.

Joel Gonzalez, regional board secretary, said the employers noted their willingness to grant increases during the three-day consultation with labor and management sectors in the cities of Cotabato, Koronadal, Kidapawan, Koronadal and General Santos.

But Gonzales said employers were leaning the matter to the board.

He said currently, the wage board has yet to formulate the wage increase guideline for the region but hinted the increase would be at least similar to that in neighboring areas.

The Inquirer learned that the Gandungan peninsula wage board granted an P13 daily wage increase.

But the labor sector here said it wanted at least a P50 daily minimum wage increase.

The average daily wage in Central Mindanao is P176 plus P10 in productivity incentives.

Salvador Justin Martin, a labor leader here, said that while the P50 daily wage increase is fair enough, they would "also take in to consideration the capability of our employers to pay."

He said other economic packages in lieu of monetary benefits would certainly help the labor sector cope with the high cost of living.

"The cost of living here is high as compared to Koronadal City, General Santos and even Davao City," he said.

Mrs. Martin said the cost of bad here is P1 to P2 higher compared to prices in Davao.

Lawyer Cecil Tiras, regional labor director, said a meeting of minds between and among labor and management groups would help improve the region's economy.

Despite labor unrest in some parts of the country, General Santos remains relatively a haven of industrial peace. Edwin D. Fernandez, *PDI Mindanao Bureau*

GUSTO

Children from San Nicolas West village in Agoo, La Union celebrate their catch of the day as floods brought by Typhoon "Igme" inundated its paddies. The nearly six-kilometer field once came as food to some residents in the town.

Bank VP found dead in car in Batangas

CAMP VICENTE LIM, Laguna—Police on Tuesday found the body of a banking executive of International Exchange Bank (I-Bank) inside a parked vehicle along a national road just a few meters from a police camp in Barangay Sto. Domingo, Sta. Rosa town, police said yesterday.

Supt. Edgardo Sampor, town police chief, identified the victim as Lenita Rabulo, 32, single, a resident of 39 Homes, Sucat, Parañaque and vice president of I-bank with office address at 142 Amorsolo St., Legaspi Village, Makati City.

SPO2 Tinito Gaspano said effervescent of Rabulo, Catalyst Lacno and Carina Erwin, identified Rabulo's body at the morgue.

Sampor said Insp. Noli Arcinue of the police Special Action Force was conducting an inspection around the vicinity of Camp Gen. Domingo when he noticed the parked vehicle at about 4:30 a.m.

When the police tried to check on the vehicle, Arcinue was surprised to see the bloodied body of the victim in the car's passenger seat. He then immediately called the local police station, Sampor said.

Police said the victim, who was only wearing a white T-shirt and red sporting shorts, apparently died from a bore gunshot in the left side of her head.

"The victim was apparently shot elsewhere and the suspect just abandoned her and the vehicle in the area. Otherwise, the police [would have] heard the gunshot," Sampor said.

He said it was also possible that the victim was killed outside the car as the police failed to find any spent bullet shell inside the vehicle. It was not clear, however, if the victim owned the car.

He added that officers of the National Anti-Kidnapping Task Force headed by a certain Insp. Pit Ventura had sought their help in investigating the case.

The BAECD official said Sampor that they had already arrested the suspect, identified as Stephen Brenter, 32, said to be a customer representative of I-Bank.

Police said monday and robbery charges have already been filed against the suspect. *Marlon Ramos, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

LIFE ON THE LINE

Taking a page from the Bible on the martyrdom of St. John the Baptist, Baguio-based mural-maker Bel Espiritu protested the detention of Angelo de la Cruz, who was taken hostage in Iraq and whose fate is now in the hands of President Arroyo.

9 quarry operators on Boracay Island sued for illegal limestone extraction

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
PDI Visayas Bureau

ILOILO CITY—The Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources in Western Visayas has filed charges against nine operators who have illegally quarried limestone on Boracay Island.

Red five-page complaint filed before the office of the provincial prosecutor of Aklan, the MGB charged the operators and landowners with theft of minerals in violation of Section 103 of Republic Act 7942 (Mining Act of 1995).

Named respondents were the International Builders Corp. (IBC) through its president, Edith Lee Tan; Bernard Espiritu; Wilfredo Cirilos; Jane Jacopides; heirs of Marcos Bulalia; heirs of Antipolito Cobrin and property administrator Joselito Caro; Benjamin Tirol, heirs of Quintin Ambray and property administrator Anita Omamog; Ida, a the private contractor of the Caticlan jetty port at the southeastern tip of the island.

Theft of minerals carries a punishment of six months to six years imprisonment or a fine from P12,000 to P200,000.

The respondents were also charged with violating DENR Administrative No. 11, which prohibits all mining activities on the island resort, and Proclamation No. 1801. The proclamation issued on Nov. 10, 1978, declared Boracay and several other small islands as tourist zones and explicitly prohibits all mining activities in these areas.

The complaint followed accusations conducted by a team from the MGB regional office on Feb. 20-22 on illegal quarry operations in the three villages of the island.

The investigation showed that quarrying of limestone, which started in 1990, had permanently damaged part of the landscape of the resort, the country's premier tourist destination. The deep-cut areas in some of the quarry sites reached an average of 15 meters deep.

The sites, all located in private lots, cover a total area of 11,250 square meters and the volume of extracted limestone reached 45,000 cubic meters. The limestone was used as landfill materials in the construction of resorts and restaurants and for a new jetty port in Caticlan.

Jerry Cabrillos, senior environmental management specialist and member of the investigating team, earlier said the total volume extracted is estimated to cost P2.1 million to P3.7 million.

NPA leader behind killing of Bulacan town cop chief captured

CAMP GENERAL ALEJO SANTOS, Bulacan—A joint police and military team arrested on Wednesday a ranking New People's Army leader in Bulacan who was suspected of killing the police chief of Sariaya town.

Jose Garcia, alias Ka Ugat of Isidro Bernardino Tribunal town, was arrested by members of the 301sth provincial mobile group, Military Intelligence Group and the Army's 56th Infantry Battalion on July 7, a month after Supt. Thurton De Arimas was killed.

Supt. Arnold Gamanosa, Bulacan police intelligence and investigation chief, said the team arrested Garcia at the city hall compound of San Jose del Monte. He said Garcia was listed as bodyguard of Reynaldo Ace Pedro, the newly elected vice mayor of San Jose del Monte City.

Gamanosa said Garcia was the secretary of the guerrilla front committee and commander of the 16th operating territory Bulacan.

De Arimas was gunned down while he was on his way to work in Barangay Sto. Cristo, Angat on June 7.

Aside from Garcia, also charged with the murder of De Arimas were Teffilo de Guzman, secretary of the Bulacan provincial committee; Julie de Leon; Roberto Atienza; Noely Laquio; Ernesto Mendez, Alexander Tigas and a certain Ka Mio; Ka Perry; Ka Gabby; Ka Cherry; Ka Caloy; Ka Allan; Ka Magic; Ka Joel and Ka Isidy.

Also charged was Gregorio "Ka Roger" Rosal, spokesperson of the 16th front in Bulacan, Quezon.

Gamanosa said Garcia was also a suspect in the killing last year of Nilo Santos, municipal planning and development officer of Angat, and Luis Reyes, a rebel returnee from Cotabato town, Estimado Reyes. *PDI Central Luzon Desk*

MISSING

Siblings H.R. Bari Catingal Gonorilla (right) and H. R. Arundaki have been missing since May 26. Their mother, Amelen Catingal Gonorilla, said they were taken by her estranged husband, Sri Lankan Rahavgamuwa Rankinge Asoka Jayasakara Gonorillaa, at 11:30 a.m. May 26 at the Manjak Subdivision in Cotapus City, Ontario Province. Bari, 9, and Arundaki, 6, were born here in Milan, Italy, and speak only English and Binghalese. For information, please call 09.06.83686 or (04) 2621498.

Site of US training historic Moro rebel battleground

COTABATO CITY—Lawmen were in North Cotabato, the site of the US-led militarist training set for late this month, was also the scene of fierce battle since the 1940s between Moro guerrillas and government soldiers.

On May 2, 1945, Muslim Filipino resistance of the United States Armed Forces of the Far East (Usaffe) in the area, who had been fighting the Japanese Imperial Army, assembly met by the bank of the Mulondog River on whether to hold talks with the resistance following a unilateral "surrender order" from US General Jonathan M. Wainwright.

Military historian Gliserio Budiaran wrote in his book "Christian-Muslim Guerrillas of Mindanao" that based on surviving transcripts of military radio messages and the memoirs of the late Sgt. Salipada Pendatun, there top guerrilla leaders, Muslim leaders Pendatun, Datu Udtog Matalam and the brothers Mohammad and Mamintal Odtongan initially organized the Bolo Battalion.

It was the nucleus resistance unit that evolved into what was later known as the Cotabato Battalion. Force of the Mindanao Resistance Movement, which became triumphant on Oct. 7, 1945 with the Fall of Tawitawi, Bahaduan.

But forward 58 years later, the Japanese government handed a big six-pavion project, tapping the historic river and nearby Mandalagan River, to fight poverty in the area.

The project, aimed at improving the lives of farmers in several North Cotabato and Maguindanao towns, however sparked unease here.

This time, between the forces of World War II veterans were Moro Islamic Liberation Front leader Hadji Murham and Wendelin Magandingan and government soldiers.

The military area then ordered to flush out Magandingan's forces from the area because they were allegedly sabotaging the project.

Ironically, Magandingan, whom the government wanted driven out, is a child of the Mulondog Mandalagan area.

His resistance caused him the life of his only son that in an encounter shortly after that, painful lunch, he and blood was the equivalent of defending one's territory.

With the peace process, Magandingan's forces fell silent but their determination never die only as ex-fighters have known.

North Cotabato Gov. Emmanuel Pifiol, who had made public his willingness to host in his province full-scale joint RP-US military exercises, up general to have backtracked from his approval and all-out support statements earlier on. Nash E. Abadiano, *PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Lawyers shun handling case of slain ex-campus beauty

By R. Arcalas and R. Dizon
PDI Central Luzon Desk

TARLAC CITY—With every private lawyer they approached refusing to take on the case, the family of a 21-year-old former campus beauty allegedly killed by her boyfriend two weeks after they broke up is desperate for every legal aid that would ensure justice for the victim.

"We are poor, but I want justice for my daughter," said Lolita Catama, mother of Lorenalyn Mah Rohan, whose body bore a stab wound under her left breast and a rib fracture, among other injuries. She was buried on June 17.

Catama, 46, said her daughter and the suspect, Mah Jonathan Go, 24, had been going steady for a year when the victim decided to end the relationship.

Two weeks after they broke up, on the afternoon of June 12, Go, 23-year-old sister fetched Rohan and, along with other friends, went to the suspect's residence.

On the night of June 12, Catama said, she was trying to reach her daughter by her cellular phone but it was turned off.

At dawn the next day, she said, policewomen came to her house and asked if she was Rohan's mother. It was then that she learned that her daughter was already dead.

In an affidavit, witness Ernesto de Jesus, 21, said he saw Go punching the victim in the chest. When he approached them, the witness said, Go told him: "Huwag mo akong pakialaman. Ako ang bahala dyan sa babae." (Don't interfere. He said he was only helping his sister Rohan inside Go's house.)

Now that her daughter was dead, she said the only thing she could do was "find justice for her daughter's death."

But the difficulties she was having in finding lawyers to represent her daughter's case, she said, were already eroding her faith in the justice system.

She said four days after her daughter's death, she went to a lawyer who promised to handle the case. But when she returned to him on July 2, the lawyer told her he could not take on the case anymore because it was already being covered by the media.

Another lawyer she said he had also refused to accept the suspect as his client. She said the lawyer expressed concern that if he accepted the victim's case other witnessing the suspect's ire might be threatened.

Catama said other lawyers she approached told her that they would not take on the murder case against Go because it would not prosper without a witness.

'AT ALL COSTS'

New Isabela gov orders stop to 'jueteng'

CAGAYAN, Isabela—Gov. Maria Grace Carlos Padaca has made the eradication of jueteng and other forms of illegal gambling in the province as one of her priorities when she assumed office last week.

She ordered the Isabela police to stop jueteng operations "at all costs" and "as soon as possible."

Padaca, during a meeting with provincial police officials on July 6, promised Senior Supt. Napoleon Baffiles, Isabela police director, that he would "face the consequences" should he fail to immediately stop jueteng and other illegal gambling operations in the province.

She said she ordered the crackdown after reports reached her that there was swearing before money from suspected gambling lords.

"I do not want to meddle with the police because Supt. Baffiles is the master of ordering checks of police who do not perform their jobs, it is up to him. He said he would immediately relay the order to the chiefs of police and his policemen in Isabela," Padaca said.

Ex-Santiago City Mayor Amelita Navarro-Dy has ordered Supt. Victorio Talosig, the city police director, to stop jueteng operations in the city.

Navarro-Dy said she was supporting the proposal of Interior Secretary Angelo Reyes to legalize jueteng. "Legalize [so] that it is done this way. That will give revenues to the government and will alleviate [the] graft and corruption of the cops," she said.

In Pampanga, Gov. Mark Lapid issued a memorandum to Senior Supt. Rodolfo Mendoza, provincial police director, to "maximize, stamp out/or eradicate illegal gambling activities within the province."

Lapid said the memorandum, the first he has issued in his term, covers jueteng operations. (R. Arcalas, Vinnie B. Jiz, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau, with a report from Jennifer Crojos, PDI Central Luzon Desk)

HOPEFUL
Two Muslim children sit under the sun in Manila. Lanao del Sur following the recent signing of a declaration of peace by townfolk hoping the declaration would finally put an end to armed clashes that put civilians in the crossfire.

Study revived to make ethanol from sugarcane

By Carlo P Gomez
PDI Visayas Bureau

BACOLOD CITY—The Department of Agriculture has revived a decades-old study on the feasibility of producing ethanol, a fuel additive derived from sugarcane.

Ethanol as a fuel additive seems to be the most promising alternative to use of fossil sugarcane and could boost the country's sugar industry, according to Agriculture Secretary Luis Lorenzo, who was reported to be one of the Cabinet members on his stop-over.

Lorenzo said the ethanol program was among the measures taken by the government to find alternative uses for sugar as part of efforts to modernize the industry.

"The most interesting research at this time is restarting the ethanol program, which today has evolved into an ethanol program," he said.

Lorenzo said Brazil has had tremendous success in its ethanol program and the DA would like to see if it could also be done in the Philippines.

Lorenzo said part of process of sugarcane manufacture intended for the export markets would be used in the a test run in the making of alcohol, with the objective of finding out how much it would cost to produce ethanol.

The test, he said, would be done in Iloilo.

Lorenzo, who was in Negros Occidental to speak at the Negros Island College of Agriculture graduation ceremonies in Kabankalan City, also reiterated the government's continued commitment to improve agricultural production, agriculture being the backbone of the country's economy, and providing employment to two out of three Filipinos.

He said sustaining agricultural growth and productivity is crucial to food security and ensure that long-term development and genuine peace in the country.

Under the Arroyo administration, agriculture grew at an average of 4 percent as against the 1.2 percent average attained under the previous administration, he said.

He said last year's 3.6 percent growth was significant because "it surpassed the annual growth targets of a particularly good year for agriculture, and overcame the merciless weather in 2003—with the tail-end of 32 NMs causing the first quarter and two super-typhoons encouraging in the third quarter."

Cooperative denies PDI report on Pagoda tragedy

BOSOBOS, Bulacan—Officials of one of the biggest cooperatives in the country have denied any involvement in the collapse of the Pagoda Shrine during the celebration of the Feast of Atos in Sitwa last 13 years ago.

Maria Evelyn Soliguit, general manager of the St. Phillip of Jesus Credit and Development Cooperative (SMCDC), said the officials did not heed the Ilaya committee, which was blamed for the accident that killed 203 devotees and seniors on July 2, 1993.

Soliguit was reacting to a July 3 Inquirer report that SMCDC officials had been indicted in the accident.

In a letter to the Inquirer, Soliguit said SMCDC members were among the victims of the accident. She said their cooperative was asked by the Ilaya committee, then headed by Rolando Pascual, to participate in the services held around the Pagoda where 19 of the cooperative officers drowned when the shrine collapsed.

She said no case had been filed against any official of the cooperative.

Charged with reckless imprudence resulting in multiple homicide before the Malolos regional trial court were Pascual, Teodoro Nicolas, contractor of the Pagoda; Nilando Dungan, owner of the three boats used in the Pagoda; Jose Pangan, operator of the towing service; and Clara Florentino, designer of the altar of the Pagoda.

The case was later transferred to the municipal trial court here and in Bulacan town.

Judge Wilhelmina Mikaela Mesaya of the Bulacan municipal trial court dismissed the case against the accused in 1995 due to lack of evidence.

Baby Celestino, an SMCDC member who lost her husband and two daughters in the accident and who heads the Pagoda Victims Foundation, also denied she and some members of her group had filed cases against Pascual and four others.

According to Soliguit, Celestino also had not talked with the Inquirer reporter who authored the commemorative issue in the tragedy. She said Pagoda Victims Foundation, also denied the said some members of her group had filed cases against Pascual and four others.

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Dengue stalks children in E. Visayas, kills year-old boy

By Joey A. Sarmiento
PDI Visayas Bureau

PALO, Leyte—The Department of Health in Eastern Visayas has reported that at least 249 persons have been afflicted with dengue fever since January this year, with a 1-year-old boy dying because of the mosquito-borne disease last week.

Boyd Grove, DOH regional sentinel nurse, told the Inquirer that the boy, from Tacloban City, died of dengue fever last July 3.

Grove said that their monitoring showed that the number of dengue fever cases from January to the first week of this month was higher than the 297 cases reported in the same period last year. For the entire 2003, there were four deaths from the 1,391 dengue cases recorded in the region.

Grove said that of the cases recorded this year, Leyte had the most dengue cases with 279, followed by Biliran (26 cases), Samar (10 cases) and Eastern Samar (12 cases). The provinces of Southern Leyte and Northern Samar had seven and one dengue cases respectively.

In Leyte, Tacloban had the highest number of dengue cases with 147, followed by the towns of Palo (39 cases) and Ormoc City (16 cases).

Grove said that dengue patients from three hospitals came from different parts of the region.

Grove told the Inquirer that while the number of dengue cases in the region could be considered as reaching "alarming" levels, it should not create panic as the cases were not concentrated in a single area.

"We urge our people to clean their surroundings and destroy any potential breeding places of mosquitoes," he said.

He also reiterated that fogging operation is not an effective method as it would only kill the eggs and not the grown mosquitoes.

Dengue fever is caused by a virus carried by day-biting mosquitoes under stagnant and under allegations, attack herself in clear stagnant water. Dengue fever has like allegations had could be fatal in adverse stages.

Town dads drop bid to legalize lotto-based illegal numbers game

MAUI, Davao Oriental—Local legislators who proposed the legalization of "last two," the most popular illegal numbers game in many areas in Mindanao, and persons from the people has forced them to "kill" their proposal.

Municipal Councilor Joel Villor said he and his fellow Councilor Benjamin Rodriguez Jr. withdrew a resolution legalizing "last two," but she made statements to the "very wrong person" of the people here.

Last Pacific winning numbers are taken from the daily lotto draw of the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office. Local legislators who predict for the numbers game to legalization, until the cash-strapped local government would greatly benefit if it would legalize the numbers game as it can draw large revenues from its operations.

But Villor said they will review their proposal only when the people of Mati are already enlightened."

"The local government should make money in the operations of last two because right now, only gambling lords are making money from it," he said.

In their proposed ordinance, the councilors said fees collected from salons and fitnesses could be used for the education of local residents.

The cash-strapped municipal government, included with a growing budget deficit, has salons closer looks at illegal gambling as possible sources of revenue.

Newly appointed Local Government Secretary Angelo Reyes has proposed the legalization of jueteng. (Fortunato Cosmelo, PDI Mindanao Bureau)

Court orders 2 GenSan journalists arrested

GENERAL SANTOS CITY—A court here ordered the arrest of two journalists, a former city councilor and several others on persons here in connection with a libel case filed against them by a union of a fishing magnate.

Regional Trial Court Branch 23 Judge Isidro Quitain issued the warrant of arrest Wednesday afternoon against Edwin Espejo, managing editor of station Emerald Antenna Broadcasting; Espejo, reporter of local paper The Southern Review; former city councilor Franklin Lazal Jr.; and Jamilla, formerly circulation officer in charge of Business Combas and Lito Antonio, association chief of The Southern Review.

The libel case stemmed from articles published separately in banner-broadcast and Southern Review on Jan. 21, 2002 on alleged death threats issued by Rodrigo Abreu Jr. against Espejo.

In his story, Espejo said Jerry Gracia told him that Abreu wanted Lazal killed.

Abreu has a long time grudge against Lazal.

Gracia is Abreu's close friend. He later retracted his statements.

Espejo was arrested by the arrest orders. (Agaches C. Cenero, PDI Mindanao Bureau)

INQUIRER Visayas

'Education is learning to be human together'

By Hazel P. Vila
Iloilo City

DESPITE THE establishment of Philippine Science High Schools in various parts of the country and lately, special science classes in the elementary level, the Philippines has yet to improve its standing in science education.

Education, particularly in the Visayas and Mindanao, gained with dismay the 1999 results of the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) that highlighted the poor performance of Filipino students in science.

The TIMSS, conducted by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement with financial support from the World Bank, is considered one of the foremost authorities in science and math assessment because of its reliable and authentic results. The results of the 1999 TIMSS have yet to be released.

According to the 1999 TIMSS that gathered a random sample of more than 6,000 Grade 7 (first year high school) Filipino students, those from the regions served by the West Visayas State University (WVSU) in Iloilo City and the Western Mindanao State University (WMSU) in Zamboanga City consistently scored lower than students from other regions.

For instance, Western Mindanao (Region IX, where WMSU belongs), ranked the lowest in science and math among all 15 regions (excluding the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, a non-entity at the time the study was conducted) of the Philippines.

Western Visayas ranked seventh overall (below the Philippine mean of 150 and ranked 12th in terms of science, tenth in environmental science, eighth in physics, 11th in science and earth science. It placed seventh in technology.

Even all, the TIMSS reported that the Philippines "got an average score of 345 with a standard error of 7.1. This score falls short by about 20 percent of the international average of 500, with a standard error of 0.5." Thirty-eight countries participated in the TIMSS.

What went wrong

Finger-pointing was a natural result of the TIMSS findings. The TIMSS Philippine Report explained that the low scores could be attributed to the "higher international average age of students compared to that of the Philippines. Besides, the sample in the Philippines was drawn from enrollees of Grade 8 students whereas Grade 7 students constituted the sample in the Philippines."

The failure of students to do well in science was easy to blame on the poor teaching force, years of schooling, low ratio of linguistic and comprehension limitations or simply being unaware of the latest scientific developments.

Dr. Lourdes Montano, science education professor at the WVSU, said the were schooled by the TIMSS "had relatively difficult topics for the students." This, she said, showed that science education in the Philippines was not at par with trends.

"You have to consider teacher factor, attitudes, facilities, support of the administration ... in other words, the system is the problem," said Montano, who is also the director of the WVSU Regional Science Teaching Center (RSTC).

"It's the way itself. Our students can't function well because it [test] does not touch their level. They were double processing in terms of contents and interpretation. They don't enter the office and they are not even familiar with the words," said Dr. Ma. Sela Fenequito, RSTC director.

But Dr. Sherry Nichols of the University of Alabama, who was part of the Visayan Enrichment Mathematics and Science Exchange Visit to the WVSU, it was the testing that was flawed and not the system of science education in the Philippines.

"They don't take into account the linguistic ability of the students and [the fact] that other countries have two years extra in the elementary level," said Nichols of the team of the TIMSS.

On the local administration of science tests, Nichols said the tests didn't measure what the students know. "It should measure what they know. There is an assessment problem. How we test people should be 're-thought.' Filipinos know a lot, actually," said Nichols.

The solution

The desire to improve Western Visayas' regional standing in the TIMSS prompted the WVSU to team up with the United States' University of Georgia in Athens (UGA) and invite the WMSU for a workshop on integrated interdisciplinary science in the two regions. The project began in September 2003 under the auspices of the Philippine Educational Partnership Program.

Both was the concern of WVSU educators over TIMSS results that they established a "concentrated reform agenda for science education" where the UGA Science Education Department was invited to help plan, implement and document issues of vital concern to science teacher education in both the Philippines and the United States.

The two universities signed a three-year memorandum of agreement in 2000. In school year 2003-02, Dr. Deborah Tippins, the project director and professor of science education at the UGA, worked at the WVSU as a Fulbright senior scholar. The WMSU have joined as a third partner "in the effort to bring about meaningful, systemic change in science education."

The WVSU and the WMSU have sister conciliations aside from the TIMSS debacle. Both have a tradition of preparing public school teachers and are home to two of the 16 RSTCs in the country.

The UGA has a critical mass of science educators who are recognized as international leaders in the field of science education. Its Department of Science Education is recognized internationally as a premiere institution in the preparation of science teachers.

CHILDREN of Barangay Alimono, Pavia City are engrossed with their coloring books even as a student teacher from West Visayas State University helps them.
COURTESY OF WEST VISAYAS STATE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

> 'There is a bigger experience surrounding learning and the Filipinos do it beautifully. They present knowledge in an artistic way. Going beyond the brain, it goes to the heart. Your education is learning to be human together. It brings tears to the eyes,' said Nichols as she gave her reaction to the beaming future science teachers

Those who prepared the WVSU-WMSU-UGA project proposal seemed to on the mark to prepare prospective science teachers through deeper student teaching field experience.

For Tippins, the goal of the 3-year project is simple: improve the quality of elementary education teachers and interns, consider the three universities' science curriculum in terms of culture.

Immersion

Dialogue of talents and teachers need to impromptu song and dance shows and the accompanying movement despite the seriousness of an event never surprised at the gaming reaction of the visiting American professors after they gave their Community Immersion Presentations and Exhibits on Feb. 18, 2004 at the WVSU Teachers Camp.

The presentation capped the first of five goals of the project, which is to "develop a more authentic academic community learning experience in the preparation of elementary science teachers."

The participants were 109 junior students taking up Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEED), both science and non-science majors. They were deployed in four villages in rural Iloilo in December 2003 and December 2003 for at least a week where they lived in the community and shared their science lessons.

For instance, in Barangay Alimono, 11 km from Pavia City, WVSU Prof. Rhyma Hands (taught her 54 BEED students) "Hands, feet and the science. Ita, lavender and live science and relate these experiences to science education" on Dec. 14-19, 2003.

And so, when he saw the lives of Alimono, he conducted a "live study" explaining how the river system can teach concepts on weathering and erosion and how one can measure the volume of the discharge of the river and speed of the water current using improvised materials.

Even mannequins and modules became instant classrooms for concept study and the farming residents became resource persons to the students on the production of rice, corn, sugar and bananas.

Hands's students acted as resource persons in a science workshop in barkada song and children's movement making with the residents. The students showed how to use community resources, such as papaya and guavira leaf extracts, and coconut oil, for making herbal soap.

Branches of the trunks de casoy, an indigenous tree, were used as writing tools, plants water dipper as constructs and musing bowls, and discarded plastic cups as molders. Cassia leaves extracts and clay pot were also used for making ointment.

By the first days that the students stayed there, they helped the community set up a herbal garden, dig a compost pit, and plant 500 mahogany seedlings. They also held science demonstrations workings in all grade levels, science olympics, quiz bees, supplemental feeding, film showing, talent show and even a Christmas party.

Though tired and overwhelmed, the students wanted an extension to Alimono. 108 or community immersion which became a required course at the WVSU College of Education only in 2000.

Invaluable lessons

Dr. Portia Ribao, WVSU vice president for Research, Extension, Planning and Development, said what the students learned in their immersion would be invaluable in their teaching.

The students' creativity contributed to their presentations and exhibits. Against a backdrop of tiny sign boats, pictures of the immersions, paper-mache, coconut trees and a mini-replica of another river, from coconut shells, the students presented their immersion activities in panel forms, songs and dances, and other theatrical hallbreak with much passion and laughter—in the great delight of the foreign visitors.

"What we have seen represent a level of heart, a kind of soul, a kind of community," said Dr. Lorna Hammond from the California State University.

"There is a bigger experience surrounding learning and the Filipinos do it beautifully. They present knowledge in an artistic way. Going beyond the brain, it goes to the heart. Your education is learning to be human together. It brings tears to the eyes," said Nichols as she gave her reaction to the beaming future science teachers.

Such presentations and enthusiasm are rarely found among American students, she said. Another visitor, Nichols said, "Our schools are fragmented. All we have is a body life don't have a soul," she said, comparing the Philippine and American academic attitudes.

The five members of the delegation from WMSU were equally impressed but still thinking of ways to duplicate the immersion activity in Western Mindanao, given their region's economy issues.

Regardless of an immersion, no will do a qualitative study where we will look at the natural set-up and the factors affecting the learning of the students in that place," said Tippins.

The first thing they would do in relation to the immersion with WVSU and UGA is to conduct research focusing on the teaching-learning process, she added.

By the end of the 3-year project, several of faculties of WVSU-RSTC graduate would hopefully be prepared as "teachers with a global perspective in a global world," in the words of Tippins.

And a few years from now, the students of Western Visayas and Western Mindanao would do well in any science contests and they in scientifically inclined minds the reinforcements of their predecessors' TIMSS performance.

Bravo, Dinky!

LUCID INTERVAL
Antonette T. Carbonilla

RECBOD Gutierrez voted for President Macapagal Arroyo but will soon lose a Cabinet member to frolicsome.

Dinky Luciano Soliman, daughter of Lucido Soriano (senator from the southern town of Cayagan, one can only Negrense in the Cabinet after late Jose Rafael Lamaclo, who is married to this Iloilo, resigned.

Seven days after her election, Mr. Arroyo began her Cabinet revamp with a strong signal. She promoted the job of social welfare secretary to Vice President Noli de Castro and as Dinky had to resign.

But resignation is a loss to the administration of Mr. Arroyo, who is on the defensive because of recent reports on graft and corruption that tainted her ranks. If the President does not realize this, then she does not know the pulse of the people. Of all the members of the Cabinet, Dinky

rose at the top of the list for competence, honesty, performance and commitment.

Dinky has been engaged in development work as a social worker since she graduated from the University of the Philippines in 1973, a year after martial law was declared. Her first job was with the Social Action Center in the Diocese of Bukidnon, under the leadership of the late Fr. Conrado Balweg, an Ifugao. The priest was gunned down by members of a paramilitary group.

Dinky moved on to work with non-government organizations, and during the impeachment of President Joseph Estrada, was active with Bantay-ES, a civil society group.

No stranger to hard work and the poor, Dinky proved to be the best secretary of the DSWD that the administration could ever have. She helped professionalize the department so it could be it from politics, focused on developmental work, and put into action the rights-based approach rather than the traditional way of using the agency as a charitable organization known only for distributing goods during calamities.

Vice President Jr Guevs obviously does not understand the role that the DSWD plays in development work, in the protection of women's and children's rights, and in poverty alleviation. Aside from all that, the department manages $100 million in World Bank funds for the Kalahi-CIDSS program for poverty alleviation, plus another $2 million grant, also from the World Bank.

I think he chose the DSWD as one of his bargaining chips for running with Mr. Arroyo because he thinks it is a job where the least technical skill is required. The Vice President does not want to be just a heartbeat away from the presidency; he wants a job and the DSWD is it.

He could not, for example, wish for the Department of Foreign Affairs or the Department of Trade because these require extensive experience and experience. He could not wish for the Department of the Interior and Local Government where the rogue police officers, gambling lords and drug lords will eat him alive. The DSWD is, to his mind, a safe place to

gain "pogi" points.

With a nationwide machinery for "good works" for the poor, the DSWD is a good stepping stone to the presidency. But what people know is that the DSWD is a popular department, today because of the social workers who are motivated and dedicated to their job, not counting the long hours, danger and meager pay. Those are the same workers who do not want the Cabinet to be their secretary, said they will make it known to the President.

A loose person would have taken the pacifier, a lucrative post such as the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office. But no, Dinky is not one who wants a performance job for the money or the luxury car. It then is just fine for her, thank you.

For her refusal, Dinky, all of four feet and eleven inches, stands 10 feet taller than ever.

BUSINESS

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Editor Raul G. Marvals
Assistant Editor Carole S. Martens

Private group pushes tourism dev't

By Ramon W. Dionisio

THE PHILIPPINE Chamber of Commerce and Industry yesterday launched its five-point advocacy strategy for tourism that included, among others, the goal of generating $5 billion in tourism receipts.

PCCI vice president Jamie Lim said the group's program—described as an aggressive national campaign for harnessing and sustaining the growth of the tourism industry—was also aimed at luring 5 million tourists and creating 1 million jobs.

Lim said the PCCI's strategy would also serve as a measurement of performance for the Department of Tourism.

"So, the administration embarks on a (new six-year term), the PCCI would only endorse the appointment of anyone as tourism secretary if he or she can accomplish these targets within the next five years," he added.

Lim explained that the PCCI has been alarmed that the country has one of the lowest tourist arrivals in Southeast Asia.

In 2003 tourism statistics that showed Malaysia was the leading Southeast Asian country in terms of foreign tourist arrivals at 10.5 million. Thailand was second with 9.7 million; Singapore had 6.1 million; Indonesia, 4.4 million; Vietnam, 2.4 million.

Almost 1.9 million tourists visited the Philippines last year, which was less than the 2 million tourists that went to Phuket in Thailand alone.

"The Philippines took almost 20 years to increase its visitor arrival by 1 million," Lim said. "Tourist arrival in 1986 was pegged at 1 million and now it has not even reached the two million mark."

He said the government should continue working on the country's vast tourism potentials and keep on implementing previous policies that have produced satisfactory results.

Lim said the PCCI tourism strategy laid down the following "imperative actions the government must carry out to effectively achieve the targets:"

- crafting and promoting a unique Philippine tourism experience. Examples are these themed eco-tourism, gaming and entertainment, tourist meadow and historical area, shopping, resorts as well as health and festival centers, and education.
- identifying three to five tourism gateways, each with close to 10 satellite destinations. For instance, Manila as gateway to Metro Manila, Cagayan de Oro, Bicol and Palawan; Cebu as gateway to Bohol, Boracay and Siargao; Davao as gateway to Surigal Mindanao, Zamboanga and General Santos.
- initiating efforts to bring down prices—from production of travel packages offering to commodity purchases down destination but lower rates, like renting

(CONTINUED ON B2)

UCPB settles ₱7.5-B PDIC debt

By Doris C. Dumlao

(UCPB) Common Planters Bank yesterday settled ahead of maturity a ₱7.5-billion standby funding facility provided by the state-owned Philippine Deposit Insurance Corp. when the bank was hit by heavy withdrawals last year.

"This recovery effort is on track," said UCPB president Jose Quesada during the signing ceremony at the PDIC boardroom.

"Deposits continue to grow strongly and efforts to reduce our non-performing assets are proceeding very well too," he said.

He noted that the total deposits generated by UCPB grew by ₱225 billion over the last nine months to ₱87 billion, allowing the bank to pay its debts to the PDIC ahead of the September schedule.

The ₱7.5-billion loan formed part of the total assistance package that the PDIC extended to UCPB last year.

On top of the standby funding, PDIC provided the bank with a ₱30-billion package for its 10-year rehabilitation program and another ₱45-billion standby facility.

Of a ₱30-billion liquidity facility, only ₱7.5 billion was drawn by UCPB which, in turn, was fully retired yesterday.

He also reported that as of the first semester, UCPB had sold ₱15 billion of its non-performing assets while another ₱500 million would be unloaded through two retail auctions before the year ends.

A bigger chunk of the NPAs, consisting of ₱15 billion worth of real and other properties owned or acquired, would be disposed through the special purpose vehicle mechanism this month.

Currencies

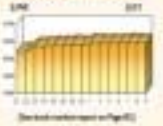
₱ 53.79 = $1
As of 5 p.m., July 9, 2004

¥ 108.17 = $1
As of 5 p.m., July 9, 2004

GOLD: $405.1 / 403.6

Stock Market

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX



(See stock market report on Page B2)

Stocks end lower

STOCKS finished lower yesterday, led by lead developer SM Prime Holdings Inc., as investors awaited economic reforms and company earnings, analysts said.

The main index dropped 5.81 points or 0.33 percent to 1,691.46 points, with gains in conglomerate Ayala Corp. and bellwether banks Metrobank Group, outweighing losses.

Value turnover fell to ₱498.39 million from Thursday's ₱689.28 million. Losers had gained 94 to 77, while 56 stocks were unchanged.

"Investors continue to await more positive developments in relation to the economic programs now proposed by President Arroyo," said PCIC Securities research head Thelma Dipasupil. Reuters

Buddy language

DOES have in my language, we are getting excited over the provocative buddy language of the barely week-old core administration of Gloriarroyo.

It is supposed to be a fresh new term by Gloriarroyo. People should feel good about such a fresh new term, even if it's a fresh new term for the same old core administration.

We presume then that down there, we are hearing a lot of good wishes tossed this new but still core administration.

It's as if it is not a recycled administration at all.

Opinion makers, business organizations and, as expected, politicos, all seem to root for this recycled administration, giving it hope for a life as good as Jose Rizal's.

* * *

LUCK, we are told that within a new mandate, whether or not it is an honest mandate, the recycled administration does not have to bet around with political payments.

And, mind you, not much politics in the past four years of governance by caucuses, did on it.

In public finance, for instance, things are okay around seven.

Decisiveness, we hear from the intelligentsia, can finally show up in Malacañang, by one single reason. And that is, Gloriarroyo does not have to go for the popular argument.

The core, unlike in the past four years of giving government subsidies left and right, and dolcore right and left, she is not running anymore, with or without Chiz-ha.

* * *

THAT, of course, is what she says.

She is not interested in extending her term after 2010, which is the time she chooses for us to shift to the parliamentary form of government.

Again, that's what she says. By the way, she also said that she would not run in 2004.

She also said that she would shift to a parliamentary government after finishing down measures that Hontoy, the core administration finally comes up with a package of 10 tax measures, including a doubling of the oil tax. Singles!

* * *

NOT too long ago, Malacañang shot down the proposed tax on text messages. Now Malacañang seems to favor a higher oil tax increase.

Now, we are text messages for manners of national importance, like chismis and jokes. On the other hand, we only use oil as producer energy to do some business.

In terms Malacañang, in a show of decisiveness, is telling us that we have better use for chismis and jokes, than we have for business. Inputs, which create jobs.

And we cannot wait to see how decisive Gloriarroyo will be, as she deals with a new kind of people power, the "influential" people power, over the 10-VAT-ed-ful.

* * *

ALL of these still boils down to politics, in the sense that politics is defined as holding on to power.

Gloriarroyo has already made it clear that she wants to be a power player even if she is not holding on to power.

Some guys who had an easier time when they joined this core administration, could not wait to get out. Take a bow, Lito Camacho.

* * *

And what we see today has a lot to do with the payment of politicos' debts. And this core administration has a lot of them.

The "influential" people, for instance, are influential because they, in effect, gave their blessings to this core administration's election... well, "maneuver."

* * *

MANY of them outsmart the thinking that, if somebody was cheated, it was his fault, because somebody stole all of his brother-in-loved himself's votes cheated.

And that is supposed to be the right thinking today. They assume some that cheating actually took place, but it is all right, because the "cheater" was weak enough, stupid enough, to be cheated.

That's what we teach our children. It is okay to cheat, if the one being cheated allowed himself to be cheated. Maybe our kids will all do well in Hagonoy.

* * *

And that kind of thinking, whether Gloriarroyo likes it or not, poses a big problem for her core administration. Her body language already shows it.

When will the core giving me down to those who "helped" in creating the magic of the last election?

And who does she favor, when two or more of those who "helped" want the same thing?

KING JAMES AUCTION
AUCTION DATE: JULY 11, 2004 (SUNDAY) 10:00 AM
INSPECTION DATE: JULY 11, 2004 from 8:00AM-4:00PM
AUCTION
Pre-Qualification Starts at 8:00AM
Terms & Conditions Apply
We Buy or Accept Consignments
NEXT AUCTION: JULY 25, 2004 (SUNDAY) 10:00 AM
KING JAMES AUCTIONEERING, INC.
Unit 1 Ground Floor, Building A, Cityland 10 Condominium, Tower 1, H.V. dela Costa St. cor. Valero St., Salcedo Village, Makati City
Tel. Nos. 751-0000 / 751-0001 / 751-0002 / 751-0003
Fax No. 751-0004
Email Address: kingjames@pacific.net.ph
Website: www.kingjamesauction.com

How do you define "wood, clean" air?

Stop into your home or office and you may unwittingly breathe in contaminated air although you may think that the air is "clean and good." Why? Simply because indoor air, whether in the office or home, contains the following materials:

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- Carbon Monoxide, formaldehyde and harmful gas particles
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- Bacteria and viruses, including mould and mildew spores
- Tobacco smoke (second hand smoke), airborne pollen and the list goes on!

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Greenaire™ Revitalizer is a technological marvel that gives you what nature has - good, clean and fresh air! It's a revolutionary product that draws in air into its system and treated via its unique botanical concentrates, a "sprinkling effect" is produced where these botanical extracts eliminate odours, bacteria, fungi and other contaminants. And the result? Noticeably cleaner and fresher air within minutes after switching on Greenaire™ Revitalizer!

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It is important to use only effective air cleaners because this does not only protect your property, it is concerned about their health. It is a known fact that good health is synonymous with breathing in good air. If the air within your home, office or shop experiences one or more of the following maladies:

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- Current normal conditions may lead to prolonged depression or "mood swings"
- Asthmatic attacks which may lead frequently headaches, dizziness or fatigue

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Disclosures

ELECTED to the board of directors of **Prpra Corp.** were Salvador Cavalla, Fernando Trinidad, Rafael Cayetto, Alfonso Cayetto, Chris Palma, Ernesto Urrutia and Rafael Jose de Lara.

* * *

PSB BYPINE Health & Holdings Corp. disclosed that one of its creditor banks, Metropolitan Bank Trust Co. has filed a notice of appeal with the Regional Trial Court of Quezon City, Branch 80 on the court's latest decision on the company's petition for corporate rehabilitation.

* * *

VOL WORKS INC. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on July 19, 3 p.m. at the Penthouse, 88 Corporate Center, Salcedo Village, Makati City. Stockholders of record as of June 27 are entitled to notice of and to vote at the said meeting. **Compiled by Ray Lyanna, PSE Research**

Private group . . .

From page B1

three places for the price of two.

- arranging reciprocity arrangements with neighboring countries on visa rates and considering bonds to be competitively priced with counterparts in the region.
- diversifying a large part of the travel tax proceeds—one of the government's major revenue sources—to tourism efforts and programs.
- giving authority to the tourism secretary on tourism-related concerns on infrastructure, peace and order and tourism action development.
- measures on tourism estate development should be given incentives and tourist shoppers should be given value-added tax refunds.

Currencies

July 9, 2004 Country	Unit	Peso Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.0000	1.00000	44.9570
Japan	Yen	0.0000	0.00908	4.9119
United Kingdom	Pound	0.0000	1.82000	100.0170
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.0000	0.12800	5.7537
Switzerland	Franc	0.0000	0.77000	34.6000
Canada	Dollar	0.0000	0.73000	32.8100
Singapore	Dollar	0.0000	0.58000	26.0700
Australia	Dollar	0.0000	0.72000	32.3640
Taiwan	Dollar	0.0000	0.03000	1.3487
Saudi Arabia	Riyal	0.0000	0.26000	11.6900
Brunei	Dollar	0.0000	0.59000	26.5200
Thailand	Baht	0.0000	0.02500	1.1200
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.0000	0.26000	11.6900
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.0000	0.00011	0.0050
Kuwait	Dinar	0.0000	3.30000	148.3700
Bahrain	Dinar	0.0000	2.65000	119.1300
Qatar	Riyal	0.0000	0.27000	12.1400
Oman	Rial	0.0000	2.60000	116.8800
United Arab Emirates	Dirham	0.0000	0.27000	12.1400
China	Yuan	0.0000	0.12000	5.3948
Korea	Won	0.0000	0.00085	0.0382
Netherlands	Euro	0.0000	1.21000	54.3900
France	Euro	0.0000	1.21000	54.3900
Germany	Euro	0.0000	1.21000	54.3900
Italy	Euro	0.0000	1.21000	54.3900
Belgium	Euro	0.0000	1.21000	54.3900
Spain	Euro	0.0000	1.21000	54.3900
Austria	Euro	0.0000	1.21000	54.3900
Finland	Euro	0.0000	1.21000	54.3900
Ireland	Euro	0.0000	1.21000	54.3900
Greece	Euro	0.0000	1.21000	54.3900
Portugal	Euro	0.0000	1.21000	54.3900
Luxembourg	Euro	0.0000	1.21000	54.3900
Argentina	Peso	0.0000	0.34000	15.2900
Chile	Peso	0.0000	0.00170	0.0764
Peru	Peso	0.0000	0.29000	13.0400
Mexico	Peso	0.0000	0.09000	4.0463
Denmark	Krone	0.0000	0.16000	7.1931
India	Rupee	0.0000	0.02100	0.9441
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.0000	0.26000	11.6900
Philippines	Peso	0.0000	0.01800	0.8092
New Zealand	Dollar	0.0000	0.69000	31.0200
South Africa	Rand	0.0000	0.16000	7.1931
Russia	Ruble	0.0000	0.03500	1.5735
Taiwan	NT Dollar	0.0000	0.03000	1.3487

Gov't plans lifting of various VAT exemptions

By Michelle V. Ramos

THE GOVERNMENT is considering lifting the VAT (value-added tax) exemption of several products and services, saying too many exemptions made it unable to maximize the revenue potential of the tax.

The Bureau of Internal Revenue said it has proposed to the Department of Finance the exclusion of the 33 products and services that currently enjoy VAT exemption, as stated under the Tax Code, hoping as would help solve weak VAT collections, the BIR added.

"There are customers who say the VAT system is not effective, but that is not because of the VAT per se, but because of the too many exemptions that we allow," BIR Deputy Commissioner Kim Henares told reporters.

Under the VAT system, the government should be able to collect the taxable amount of value-added of a product or service through taxpayers' declarations of input and output VAT credits. Which one is exempted, however, the government loses track of the exemption value-added chain, Henares explained.

Under the Tax Code, 33 products and services are exempted from VAT. These include agricultural, marine and forest products in their original state; fertilizers and seedlings; petroleum products and their raw materials; and medical and agricultural services, among others.

"It is only here in the Philippines that too many products and services are exempted from VAT. This is why even if the government increases the VAT rate, it will cannot materialize the expected revenue collection because of the exemptions," Henares said.

Wei Chuan

OPEN FOR FRANCHISE

- BB NAGSIO FRANCHISE IS A SUCCESS
- BB KATIPUNAN, SAN FERNANDO PAMPANGA & SAN LAZARO – NOW OPEN FOR FRANCHISE
- CALL OR TXT : [illegible]

The government's economic team is expected to push for the increase in the VAT rate from the current 10 percent to 12 percent when the 13th Congress opens this month.

According to an official from the Department of Finance, the BIR's head agrees, the proposal to reduce the number of VAT-exempt products and services was logical and consistent with the government's efforts to improve revenue collection.

Innove invests $6M to expand network

By Clarissa S. Balino

INNOVE Communications, a wholly owned subsidiary of Globe Telecom Inc., has invested $6 million to expand its Globelines Broadband network.

The company aims to expand its fiberline business to address demand that has not been fully served, especially in view of the recent launch of new products that will bring the benefits of internet to a greater number of people.

Globelines Broadband has deployed 80 percent of its network in Metro Manila, particularly Makati, Mandaluyong, Pasig, Muntinlupa and San Juan.

The company, controlled by Ayala Corporation and Singapore Telecommunications International Telecommunications Corporation, is approved its application to expand its local exchange operations nationwide.

Innove said that it could finally go on finish the end that year on the back of its growing fiber line and data operations. In June it is the number voice and data services arm of Globe.

The company absorbed Globelines, Globequest and another telecom brand Stratx Mobile after the Ayala-controlled firm purchased info Communications Inc. from a group led by the Delgado family of the Abanta.

Recently launched were the three packages of Globelines Broadband Express, Express and Executive. The Express package is offered for a monthly rate of P990, —the lowest DSL rate in the country today— which carries 30 hours of internet use.

The company, according to its president Gil Genio, is prepared to build significant investments in the fiberline business if it would be allowed by the NTC to become a nationwide fixed line operator.

RP does not need new program yet, says IMF

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE INTERNATIONAL Monetary Fund sees no need for the Philippines to enter into a new funding program at this point. It, however, gave no assurance that its door would always be open to any member country in need.

"In the context of the Philippine, that is not the case right now," said Masahiro Takeda, head of the IMF's visiting mission to the country, when asked whether the country would likely enter into a new funding program.

He said the existing four-month standing program (SBA) with the IMF had been extended for a year and the board would decide whether to extend again by its next meeting.

Technically, when the debt falls down to zero, that would be the absolute end," Takeda said.

He also said there were factors supporting the country's continued growth despite the government's fiscal woes, among them is the strong influx of remittances from overseas Filipinos.

This year, Takeda said the Philippine economy, in terms of gross domestic product, would likely grow by about 6 percent.

The Philippines has "graduated" from the International Monetary Fund in 2001 but remained under its supervision. It is considering a fresh standby program as a funding option should it find itself in a dire situation.

The IMF provides for frequent consultations between the IMF and members whose arrangements have expired but which continue to have outstanding credit with the Fund.

The Philippines has had 26 different financing programs with the Fund, whose funding package was used to stabilize the balance of payments problem.

Although the economy was now a net depositor to the IMF, instead of a net withdraw, the IMF chief believes the PPM was still crucial on independently confirm the soundness of the government's economic program.

Last last year, the government was keen on waiting from the PPM, which replaced an earlier precautionary arrangement with the IMF that was terminated after the country graduated from the Extended Fund Facility.

Business backs Palace moves to solve power sector woes

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo cited the growing support from private sector groups for several moves planned by the government to resolve major issues confronting the power generation sector.

Ms Arroyo cited in particular the support from the Cebu Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCCI), the Association of Generation Investors of the Philippines (Aagp) and the National Association of General Managers of Electric Cooperatives (Nagmec).

The groups earlier urged the President "to act swiftly and decisively on the planned rate adjustments of National Power Corp. and the proposed assumption by the national government of some (P630 billion in Napocor liabilities." The moves, the groups said, could hasten the privatization of the state-owned firm which, in turn, could help bring about more competitive power rates in the country.

Napocor, which is composed of the bulk of the country's total electric requirements, said the implementation of its solutions to bigger problems "is an urgent matter that must be decisively dealt with." The speedy resolution of Napocor issues is crucial to the attainment of President Arroyo's vision of electricity services to all the barangays in the country.

Napocor, for its part, said the proposed debt assumption "is long overdue." The problem must not be allowed to fester anymore since it is seriously jeopardizing the vital privatization program for the country's generation arm, the group said.

The debt assumption by the national government "is good from the investor community since point" since no one would touch a debt-ridden company. Aagp underscored. The group said investors "will look at Napocor as a 'good buy' once its books are cleaned up."

RP is 'texting' technology leader in Asia

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE PHILIPPINES was cited as the most messaging nation or "texting" technology leader in mid-texting an industry-wide think fair held in Singapore on June 23-24, according to the Center for International Trade Expositions and Missions (Cents).

Cents, an agency attached to the Department of Trade and Industry, said in a statement that the Philippines formed other countries because of its cutting systems for set-to-mail automated information retrieval through short messaging service. Other countries only have basic send-and-receive SMS.

Established in 1999, the global telecommunications industry recognizes Comunicasia as the continent's largest communications and information technology trade event that focuses on mobile networks and applications, network technologies and satellite communications.

Other awards given to the Philippines were Mobile Setter named's Most Innovative Service for Personal Entertainment's "Share-to-Send" and Telecomclinic Singapore's Best GSM Carrier for Globe Telecom; Best Telecom CEO for Globe's Gerardo Ablaza Jr. and Best Emerging Markets Carrier for Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co.

Cents said this was the country's debut in CommunicAsia, where 12 local companies took part. A total of at least 1,300 companies from 38 countries participated in the trade fair that took in 25,000 visitors.

Tada Hidekazu, deputy Director, Againo said local content providers were already very much ahead of their Southeast Asian counterparts in terms of SMS gateway and technology (messaging, gaming, location-based services and mobile commerce applications.

Aquino said this augured well for local developers who could find partners enabling the need for mobile solutions that could also cater to the Japanese and American markets that use other mobile communications systems.

1.1-BILLION LOAN FOR RURAL ELECTRIFICATION

RP credit rating seen to improve

By Michelle F. Remo

THE GOVERNMENT may expect some credit ratings to at least prevent having to receive ratings downgraded, once it posts the zero deficit figure which, in the past, once said to have been consumed due to flaws in the old system of computing public sector debt.

According to a Department of Finance official, credit rating agencies may expect a better performance of the Philippines once they take a second look at the country's fiscal performance.

The official said it is not stopping the public sector debt for 2005 after it has adopted a new and "more accurate" method of computation.

The 2005 debt was supposed to have been narrowed but last month, for recomputation of the figures based on the new method to cover the debts, the GSP said.

"Debt recomputation will positively affect our standing, considering that we were perceived to be in the brink of a debt crisis," said the finance official. "But here it will improve via image depend—unless much it will reduce the debt stock."

Fitch Ratings earlier warned government officials that it could downgrade the Philippines' credit rating if they did not quickly address the fiscal problems. The credit-rating agency took note of the government's budget deficit and outstanding public sector debt, which stood at P4.158 trillion in 2003.

The DOF is still in the process of producing official data from other government agencies and has yet to finish the recomputation of the 2005 public sector debt, the official said. Based on estimates, the 2005 debt figure could be substantially lower than originally reported.

Under the new computation method as proposed by the International Monetary Fund, the national government's borrowings from government-owned and -controlled corporations (GOCCs), government financial institutions (GFIs) and social security institutions (SSIs) will no longer be reflected in the public sector debt.

The money the national government placed in the sinking fund will also be excluded from the computation.

The sinking fund is the money the government allotted in the Grand Bank Bond of Liquidity (GS-BOL), which says the amount to pay off the old consolidated debt.

Because it was the DOF that recommended the new method of computation, allegations that the government was simply window-dressing the fund to look better on book, the official said.

He added that the government's borrowings from other government banks should not be included in the computation of the public sector debt. This is because the resources of borrowings also came from government banks, and should therefore not be considered a government debt.

The latest debt-to-GDP (gross domestic product) ratio stood at 57.5 percent. The DOF official said should the sinking fund and borrowings from GOCCs—such as the Government Service Insurance System and the Social Security System—be excluded from the debt, the debt-to-GDP ratio will improve and be reduced to only 51.2 percent.

The ratio will further improve once the amount of government borrowings from GOCCs and GFIs are removed, said the finance official.

Low revenue drives up LRTA losses to P600M

By Clarissa S. Batino

THE LIGHT Rail Transit Authority yesterday said that its losses in the first half of the year had reached about P600 million due to its soaring cost of operations amid a slowdown in revenue.

LRTA administrator Teodoro Rejardo said that the railway firm loses about P3 million each day.

"For the first half of the year, our losses would be about P600 million," Rejardo said. "On a daily basis, our estimated losses would be P3 million because of an increase in the cost of spare parts, electricity and other operational expenses."

Power accounts for about 20 percent of the railway system's operations.

Rejardo said the LRTA badly needed the P16 fare increase it had sought before the transportation department's fare freeze.

He said income from the railway system's passengers using Line 1 running from Monumento to Baclaran and Line 2 from Santolan to Pasig to Legarda was not enough to cover daily operations.

"We LRTA was hoping that each line would carry an average of 400,000 passengers daily. But Line 1 has a daily ridership of about 360,000, while Line 2 only has about 90,000.

Worse, according to Rejardo, the LRTA had to pay the interest on a P20 billion loan which repair concessional Construction Agency that financed the Line 2 project.

"We need to pay at the same rate rates, at least the interest," Rejardo said.

The LRTA chief said that 15 coaches were under repair and would require funding.

"We need a new source of funding and we believe a fare increase is due already," Rejardo said. "I think the increase in fares would be enough to pay for our obligations."

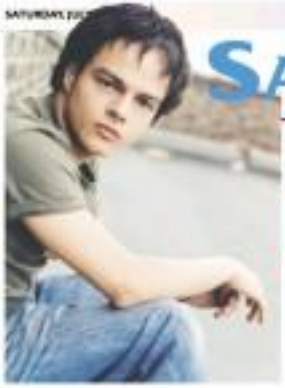
He said the fare hike should complement revenues from advertisers and tenants.

Rejardo said they were finalizing the proposed new fare match for the approval of the fare board.

According to the LRT chief the proposed fare structure would still be cheaper than what other countries in Southeast Asia were collecting.

In some countries for roughly the same distance traveled, it was shown that Taipei MTC charges P70.64, Taipei Hsin Tien, P66.46, Seoul, P68, P67.15, Singapore MRT, P53, Kuala Lumpur MT, P28, and Singapore Bukit Panjang P35.52.

LRTA fare currently ranges from P12 to P15, while for MRT 3, it is P9.50 to P24, depending on the distance covered.



SATURDAY Super

Boy-faced jazzman is hip, hot and humble

Jamie Cullum's major label debut, 'Twentysomething,' praised by critics worldwide, was one of the biggest-selling records in Britain last year. And he's only 24

By Oliver H. Palumbaris
Contributor

(Exclusive)

YOUNG BUT jazz crooner Jamie Cullum apologized for missing the first scheduled telephone interview. Earlier, his tour manager did so as well, citing unforeseen circumstances that had uprising during their hectic tour of Europe. But finally, Cullum could talk to us from his hotel room in Berlin.

The 24-year-old's major label debut, "Twentysomething," was one of the biggest-selling records in Britain last year. It was praised by many critics worldwide, who lauded the birth of another new, bright (and not bushy-haired) talent whose talents as a singer, pianist and composer promptly made waves. He will be touring Asia this month, starting with Singapore.

Cullum finished film studies at Building Uni versity. How did he become such a success in another field altogether? "That's a tough question," he admitted. "It never to music is something I never planned. It was an intense hobby [but] it wasn't until my last few months at Reading that I decided to become a professional musician. I was playing in a rock band and two hip-hop bands. I dropped out and played in a funny drum-and-bass band, and a reggae band."

He considers his music a fusion of styles, a kind of jazz that sounds especially accessible to new listeners, something that record label Universal Classics and Jazz found as they night since. He explained: "I think it's because I integrate a lot of things into one. I play rock, and they were looking for someone who can do jazz. I certainly didn't dress like a jazz musician, but then nor that I could do it."

Loves bubblegum

Cullum is particularly pleased that some of the tracks from "Twentysomething" get played on radio along with current pop hits. "I feel very proud to do my own thing, really," he said. "I love bubblegum pop. I like Justin Timberlake, Beyoncé, Outkast, Missy Elliott. I don't feel above them in any way. It's part of the industry that's become broad and wide, which is great. My style of playing and lesser pop and rock, my biggest influences."

He loved music even as a teen, Cullum said, but he played in a grungy band. None of his friends was surprised that shifting between musical forms came easy for him. "I listen to Led Zeppelin, Joni Mitchell, Herbie Hancock's 'Headhunters' album. I got into that [and] you get sectarian going on it as an outlet age. My other influences include Louis Armstrong and John Coltrane. Now I'm listening to Brad Mehldau and the band[?]."

Growing up in a musical family was definitely an advantage. His older brother Jim wrote two songs for him, "These Are The Days" and "It's About Time."

"When my brother and I collaborate," Cullum said, "it's natural and organic. We hang out together, to point. He has ideas and we play. My parents like music, too. My dad plays the guitar and my mom sang in the choir. [But] we're not like 'The Waltons,' singing around the fireplace all the time."

He never had the desire to ply any singing contests... for instance "Pop Idol," the British counterpart of "American Idol"—before he got his big break. "Never," he stressed. "I don't [even] like watching those shows because they're just about getting famous, not becoming great singers." Laughing, he added: There isn't ing against them, though. I just wanted to play music. I never wanted to be famous. You don't play jazz to be famous."

He's taken, girls

"All At Sea" was a song he wrote during a stint as a cruise ship performer years ago. It's a ballad about being alone, after a relationship ended. He admitted that he was now taken again, and that inspiration was coming from on-

(CONTINUED ON C2)

Eyes wide open

INSPIRATION is all around us. Life being art in itself, the details of every single day create a veritable collage of experiences.

It is natural for anyone to want to capture the images that rouse the senses and express joy upon surrounding.

Featuring gathered six of the country's leading visual artistes to create optical riddles for an exhibit entitled "Eyes of the World" last month at Rockwell.

Using Samsung's Digimax V5, an advanced point-and-shoot, pixel-level camera, luminaries Pitg Yuvasaraz, Bulan Mora, Francis Abraham, Sunday Angeles, Anton Aleksev and George Tapan immortalized moments to form a potpourri of color and emotion—an inspiration sandwich, if you will.

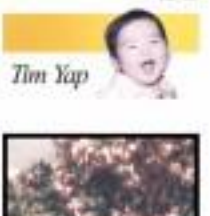
A wise man asked me once what the purpose of life was.

"Happiness," I answered.

"No," he said with a wry smile.

"The purpose of life is to make life."

On this page, here's a glimpse of the little things that make life worth living.



Tim Yap

A mid July reverie

"But awhile happy is she was thrilled.

That chat while slithering on the virgin shore

Green, love, melodies, in couple blissedness."

—Phoenix in Reverie, formerly pretending her to whose marriage ever occasions

Act I Scene I (Run 30-70)

If you are to dream, you might as well dream big.

Some of you might have heard the buzz about a new theater group called "The Metropolitan Theater Guild"—a team profit organization that was recently formed with high hopes of providing for the country's theater industry. The members are driven by the dream to not only entertain people with productions of grand proportions. They want to bring the whole world of Philippine Theater to another level that melds the multitude of cultural and creative Filipino—in a channel through which our voice will be known. They even have hopes of building an academy of the Arts for training and developing the Filipino talent. Like I said, if you are to aspire, don't make it small. The possibilities are endless.

To made their bids, their public christening is staging their own version of William Shakespeare's, "A Midsummer Night's Dream." Assembling a blend of gifted artists, and under the directing prowess of Dr. Rolando Abad, the play holds a promise of great things to come. Governed by the impressive amount of "flying scenes" (done by the Australian special effects team behind The Matrix Trilogy) a stargazing and impressive at the very least.

The popular videoke song "The Impossible Dream" might as well as all. Dreams of things the world has never seen nor just heard of—perhaps, of a Filipino walking on the moon next time.

Saturday, July 10

The official gala night of the Met Theater's "A Midsummer Night's Dream" will yet again remind us that Shakespeare does not always envision a love story in a tragic affair, that the characters don't always kill themselves in the end, and that there are other good romantic plays apart from Romeo and Juliet. The formal opening night for the public will be on July 16 and will run until Sept. 25 at the Carlos P. Romulo Theater, RCBC Plaza, Ayala Avenue corner Buendia Avenue, Makati City. Tickets' prices are at P1,000, P1,500 and P1,500. They are available at all Ticketworld outlets (891-9999). For inquiries, e-mail the Met Theater at metropolitan_theater@yahoo.com.

Boy-faced

Vince Lagahit

crowdsurfer. "My girlfriend keeps on cheering!"

The actual process of composing varied from time to time, he said: "There are no set rules. Sometimes nothing took me six entire afternoons. My life is hectic and crappy.

I write anywhere—on the back of a paycheck or a boarding pass, at the airport—wherever I can. I have to be receptive to creativity, wherever I am."

If he hadn't landed the rapper/author/actor/emcee gig now, Gilbert said, it was a good guess he'd still end up writing. "I'd probably be working in film, or I'd like to be a writer, a journalist or a novelist. It's absolutely great that I can write and pour my soul into a different venue than everyone else's with my songs."

Mad as a hare

He finds it unsettling that his newfound fame has brought about unusual experiences, since he considers himself a regular person who loves watching movies and the "telly." "I was followed by paparazzi when my girlfriend and I were shopping once," he reminisced. "It was pretty tense and weird. And when I perform, it's like I'm in a rock concert. People jump up and down, dancing. It's just mad!"

As for his wardrobe, the jazz connoisseur said it was "normal": T-shirt, ratty jeans, sneakers, casual boyfriend-wear, anything comfy and functional. "I wear the same things on and off stage. I buy my own clothes, wash them and iron them myself. All that you see in the photographs are mine."

His playful covers of Lido Burier's "I Get a Kick Out of You" and other standards have prompted some listeners to compare him with Michael Bublé. "He's a very good friend," Gilbert said. "He's got a very good voice. What he does is especially fascinating considering for the most pro. I want to create something for myself, make my own music."

Keeping sane

Having been in the scene for barely two years has taught him an inescapable truth: "A lot of this industry is bullcrap. The ways to keep sane is to keep artistic restored. You have to keep it real. But it has become business, business, business. They don't call them CDs or records—they call them units."

Here we, he hopes to develop his music further in the coming years. "With this album, I actually just scratched ... made a tiny dent on ... the massive, massive ocean of music. I'm still learning. My music is gonna continue growing. I hope to be a lot better. The great thing is, just has no boundaries."

Lemon-aide

Giselle Segovia

Sunday, July 11

Here's a treat for the young and the young at heart. "Noah's Big Boat" opens this weekend at the Music Museum and will run until Aug. 7. Its creative forces under undertaking, this production features 30 puppets, each about a meter tall, reminiscent of the Japanese "Bunraku." With stars cast by much revered artists such as Joey Marquez, this show certainly promises a fresh take on the Bible's great deluge. For details, call 631-1630 or 636-2482.

Monday, July 12

This day is the last day of screening the artistic Film entries of the 6th Makati Cinemanila International Film Festival. The list of acclaimed pictures is long and diverse—a remarkable mix of films from different countries. The controversial documentary "Isotia" is included in the festival. Watch the movies at the Greenhills Cinemas (call 724-7901 and 721-7973 for details).

Tuesday, July 13

The colorful and almost playful joint exhibit of Agung Hujatula, Tita Ramos, Jef Sumaoang, Elias Santos and Ben Farrington are on display at Gallery Mezzanine's level of 188 Kingsford's Building A. One need to describe the show: vibrant. Call 687-7282 for inquiries.

Wednesday, July 14

Be sure not to miss the bride's comeback in the passionately virtuous can such name on her deadly lie. All Bill is on its second week of screening at the times wouldn't be so long. Yes had Claire Ishii's head has already been dropped off—duh!, my favorite character. Check the street theater (nearest you for the

HIRAYA Lavarez (left) and Pepsi Paloma sign up the stage at the Carlos P. Romulo Theatre as the RCBC Plaza with **A Midsummer Night's Dream**' opening July 16 until the 25th.

evening schedule).

Thursday, July 15

If you're a kid of the '80s, you would not want to miss this: Mike Francis is performing live at the Greenhills Activity Center, Ayala Center, Makati City. Can you imagine hearing the song "Friends" live? That will if you make it there by 7 p.m. For maximum cuteness from slow your favorite '80s outfit.

Friday, July 16

Nike enthusiasts and people with a need for sportswear I race to be at Rockwell's Powerplant on this night, that's "The Big Nike Showcase—Pure and Soft and Take a Ride on the Wild Side" will unite the people of the hiking scene in one big hiking affair. The event, admittedly is a "Risk But super Drive, Powerplant Mall, Rockwell Center, Makati City, starts at 7 p.m.

The Word for the Bored:

"You should see Calgary."

—comment made by a former lover of Celia Rosell after his crude scene in Michael Cunningham's "A Home at the End of the World," reportedly silenced too many gasps on your audiences hearing the scene had to be cut out of the film.

SUPER! SCOOP

Pebble in the shoe

Press freedom is the real issue in the ongoing tug-of-war over 'Imelda,' the movie

By Nesdia Diaz

A BIG, fat question mark sits where a movie poster should be.

The movie in question is "Imelda." The 100 minute documentary about the larger than life former first lady of the Philippines. The film was named best in Cinematography at the 2004 Sundance Film Festival last January, and has since been shown in international film festivals in the United States, Costa Rica, Europe, Australia and New Zealand.

It has generated rave reviews in such publications as The San Francisco Chronicle, Variety magazine, The Village Voice, American Cinematographer, The New York Times, Vanity Fair and Vogue magazine, to name a few. The Hollywood Reporter wrote: "It should be a hit! Wonderfully shot, the film shows the beauty of the Philippines and the struggle of the people to just get by."

The Filipino moviegoer is left in a state of wonder—that is, wondering until now about the film's success, and if or when it will be shown in local theaters. Back in life here in the Philippines, where the distance between two points never seems to be a straight line. A temporary restraining order issued by the Makati Regional Court has delayed the scheduled premiere at the Greenhills Film Festival. Now the matter is before the Supreme Court. This, in spite of the O.K. given by the Movie and Television Review and Classification Board, along with a recommendation that the film be shown in schools.

Bigger issue

Imelda Marcos herself filed the injunction, after issuing a statement to the effect that "Imelda" the movie was a violation of her privacy. In her latest court testimonial, a tearful Mrs. M. claimed that her signature at the bottom of the production contract dated December 11, 1996...which indicated her agreement to be filmed and interviewed extensively for a full-length documentary...had been forged.

Let us leave the arguments to the lawyers, and have faith that the Filipino public is intelligent enough to make a fair judgment on the issue. There is a much bigger issue here. Let us call it the stand.....Freedom of the Press.

Doubtless, Imelda Marcos is a public figure to this day—a famous icon, in fact, once dubbed the Western media as the "Indian Evil Aida." In a recent interview, filmmaker and "Imelda" director Ramona Diaz explained: "Banning this film raises questions about freedom of the press. It's so ironic that it's Mrs. Marcos who is trying to stop it ... we have to go back to 1986, when the freedom of the press was hard fought and won."

Character-driven

One critic wrote that "Imelda" resembled "neo-Michael Moore territory."

Michael Moore is a documentary filmmaker who made headlines (and raised eyebrows) at last year's Academy Awards) with his controversial and scathing indictment of the current Bush administration in "Bowling for Columbine." These days, he's been turning the fiction-check mirror with his latest work, "Fahrenheit 9/11," currently showing in theaters in the United States.

Diaz was quick to point out the differences: Moore had a pro-liberal agenda, while her work was largely character-driven. Diaz did cite Moore, however, in elucidating her point on the issue of press freedom: "There is no way that Bush will go near banning Michael Moore's film ['Fahrenheit 9/11'). And even if he tried to, he knows would conflict."

Just imagine if, by some bizarre twist of fate (and this country is by no means a stranger to division-making by sleight of hand), "Imelda" were banned from ever being screened. Would that mean that any public figure, upset by critical and/or legal examination undertaken by any media outfit, could then block it by simply filing a court complaint?

Show business

Among new "Imelda" revelations, the critics is amused by all the offscreen drama. Every film-goer should see the movie, not just because it's the current toast of the global entertainment media and something we can all be proud of, but more so because it has recorded a vital chapter in our history. "I especially want young Filipinos to go and see it," Diaz said. "The 34 year old today were born in 1980. They have no memory of the martial law years, or what happened in Edsa."

In the tale of irony, a postscript is in order. We all know too well that any spark of controversy only serves to stir curiosity alluring. For everybody's sake, let us hope that the only issue we will have in the next few weeks relative to "Imelda" will be the applause at the film's opening credits.

SATURDAY Super

The Valium-driven pace of non-Hollywood fare challenged my patience, but also trained me to watch movies in a different way

A SCENE from Bus 174

WHAT'S ON AT ROBINSONS

Straight from the arthouse

Tats Diaz

MY FIRST dip into the pool of arthouse films happened not as a matter of choice but as a matter of life and death.

It was back when I was a third-year business student in the unforeseen, unnerving-as-the-brink-of-failure because of-its-upsetting-grades-is-encountering. I was because my "extra credit subject", a desperate student who took advantage of any excuse to pull me to other subjects and breathe life back to the grade point average. Saturday mornings, most amusingly early, I would trek to the university gallery to watch foreign films because such screenings earned the film-critic points in freshmen.

It was on these Saturdays, when the rest of the normal student population was catching up on much needed sleep, that I was instead cramming to soul searing and reeling from damn subtitles on the television screen. The sense of shame was palpable among the students present—we all knew the reasons we were there, and it wasn't a passion for film or various artistic names we couldn't pronounce.

I remember watching such films as "The Seventh Seal" by Swedish director Ingmar Bergman, "Le Chien Andalou" (Andalusian Dog) by Spanish director Luis Bunuel, "Stalker" by Alfred Hitchcock, and "Rashomon" by Akira Kurosawa. It was in these screenings that I first held eyes on luminaries in Cannes, but remained from the parties they frequented surreptitiously and playing the young French poet Arthur Rimbaud in the film "Total Eclipse."

I admit that it felt uncomfortable in the beginning. I would emerge from the gallery-cum-mini theater with a befuddled look, and suddenly feel the urge to change into a black turtleneck, hie off to a coffee shop, and chain smoke while pondering what the hell happened in the last scene ... and where the hell were the happy endings. As the summers turned down, however, I got hooked on the once-alien, arthouse world.

Eventually, the extra credits didn't matter anymore, and I stopped expecting happy endings. I welcomed the shift of perspective, the exotic landscapes and cultural nuances, which were a refreshing change from the in-your-face, money-driven brash of Hollywood. Yes, the slow-as Valium-driven pace of many of the films did challenge my patience, but it also enthralled me as much—worked in a different way. **monster as insights revealed in subtle gestures, and seeing in so powerful emotions evoked in wordless communication.**

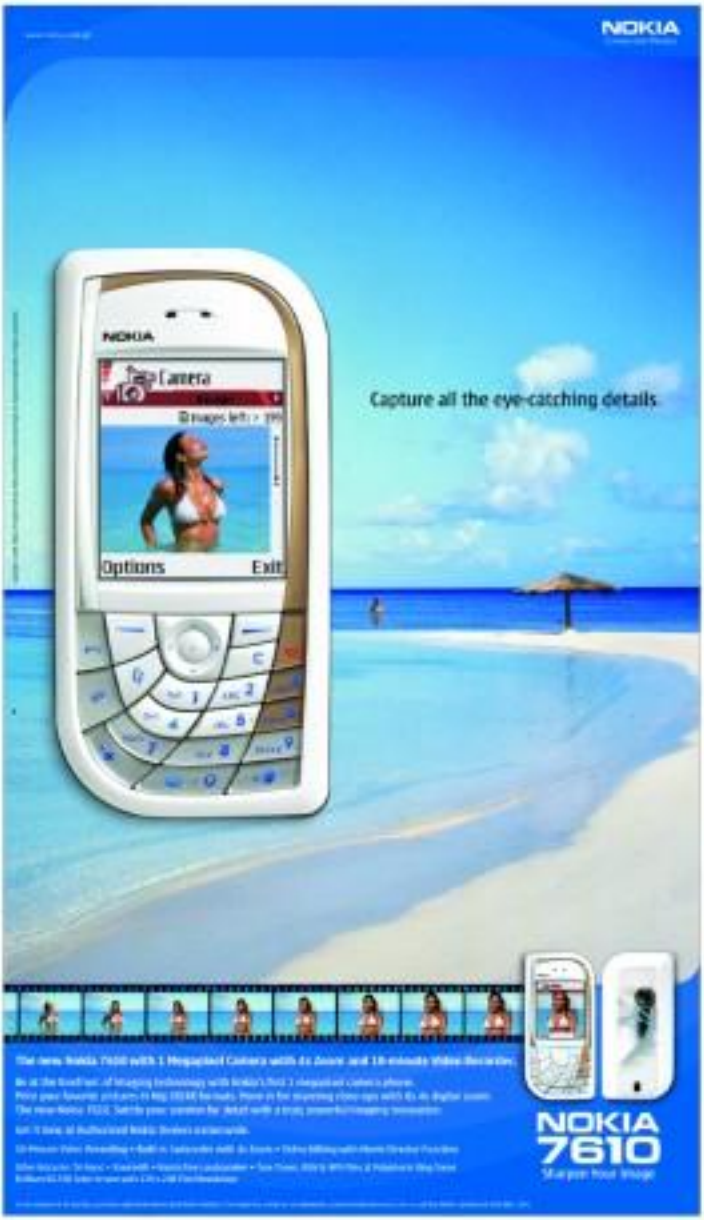
Thus, my patience gradually turned on me in a blessing in disguise: one clear thought above a peripheral passion, my semester in hell turned out to be my cinema paradise.

'Sure winners'

Of course not everybody was smitten as I was with bad grades, so I acknowledge to this day that no-one-I-really-acquired-a-taste-for-foreign films. **Until ask my ex-boyfriend,** who could never get excited over news that the Oscars? Purely British film festivals-were happening in a nearby theater complex. "If no, it does have a funny-sexy premiere feel to-say, "Wanna catch the Wong Kar-Wai film at 3?" compared to, for instance, "Yes, Spider-Man 3pm!!!"

Now, let's mind-the-reel back a bit. What is an arthouse film?

"Arthouse" is used to describe films or movies from other countries, or the type that dwell in depression like acquainted males. The genre is also tagged "world cinema" or "auteur cinema" or, simply, foreign films. In the end of World War II, as this element proliferated in the United States, satisfying a growing segment of the



Stopping for Gas

FUEL UP: Gas' style-citizens (curved) look positive into occupation

By Gino de la Paz

MY FIRST run in with Gas Astro was at Underground Men, a young men's brand store at the New Id. mezzanine floor, two years ago. After a lifetime of being exposed to standard store generic jeans from the likes of Old Navy and Eddie Bauer, I found it very refreshing to scope out new generation Italian denim in North America's largest mall. Unfortunately, I had just enough money to spend on lunch. Fortunately during a late lunch with friends at Boston's no. 1 really couldn't afford a pair.

However, no luck would have it... Gas Astro has followed me back to Manila. I was one of the dozens or so individuals who congregated basic Italian style with Gas Astro (Gas) at the recent opening of their new store at the Podium, Ortigas Center.

Over grilled scallops, pan-roasted Chilean seabass, and crab lasagna and Portobello mushroom risotto, we had a conversation without subject matter somewhere

New-generation Italian denim finds its way to Manila ... and a frenzied welcome

worked its way from Italian wine to the recently overrun Chinatown, Mary Kate. Some did that happen? Perhaps it was the lethal combinations of wine and dessert, and must-appear paranoia thing that was mildly bizarre but complete nonetheless.

Stepping out of the dinner mist, then, we all made a beeline to the front of the store to witness a parade of individuals who embody the values of the brand. Libertarian friends of Jagori, Elka Lucero, Sony Zubiaga, Victor Consunji, Casey Wills, Maureen Dante, Stephanie Hardy, and Pia Herrera enjoyed watercolor moments as Gas' style citizens. Gestured from Gas' new lifestyle ad campaign, the Manila versions also featured people who have mastered a simple passion into an occupation.

With the brand's concept effectively communicated, it was time to sample the goods. Like a turnstile zipping through a fashion shoot, the shoppers left floral shirts, parachute pants, and flip-flops in colorful piles while making expert opinions on which item went best with what. Two hired promo dudettes failed to interject the spirits of the guests including myself, although pulling a Winona-at-Asia did cross my mind. The word Disney only added to the morning's giddy concept. Where the store's tireless staff? Mostly culled it a Gen, it was time that Manila's jeans scene had another place where they could fuel up. Ice fronts.

[Emerging artists unwind! Are you driven by a passion of frighteningly unhealthy? Click on www.gmanews.com and tell them about it... or send your data and work to "Gas, it's Fun" Dept. c/o GMA Via Route the Grenadiers] it, 2636 Chappaquiddick 1158 0160.]

Message in a bottle

Sicily, D&G's latest fragrance for women, is an ode to its namesake city

By Gino de la Paz

DOMENICO DOLCE and Stefano Gabbana's instincts are peerless and, doubtlessly, their evolving obsession with their own Mediterranean traditions has a lot to do with it. Sicily, the design duo's latest fragrance for women, is an ode to the architectural arabesques and Baroque palaces in its namesake city. An appropriately passionate and sensual scent, Sicily is a tangible essence of life at the southernmost tip of the boot-shaped nation known as Italy.

As Sicily's most renowned homeboys, Dolce and Gabbana have chosen Monica Bellucci as their muse, celebrating her coy-model's curves and sexting them into the embodiment of Italian femininity. For the fragrance's dramatic black-and-white ad, the maestro of Italian design called upon fellow Sicilian Giuseppe Tornatore to direct a promotion of sex into 30 seconds.

The premise was a matter of choice or hell.

Like Dolce and Gabbana's award-winning portraits, Tornatore's take on the Italian love story transports the viewer from the scenery of a woman's bedroom to the chaos of a religious procession. A silk slip, previously soiled and belonging to a woman residing in heaven, his been smelling of romance and sex, then figures into the frame and becomes the object of frenzied men who intrude to take hang. The ad's message of Dolce and Gabbana, Monica Bellucci, and Giuseppe Tornatore's collective vision master fully ties in with Sicily's message which, simply put, is absolute seduction.

HEY MAMA. Sicily muse Monica Bellucci is the embodiment of Italian femininity

JAPAN'S Zatoichi

Straight from the arthouse

From page C5

film going public who had grown weary of mainstream Hollywood fare. Some of these arthouse cinemas were first established "mom movies," a ruse that despised film theater owners employed to entice more patrons they'd have no trouble finding soon. However, with the success of art films like Bourne Identity's "Opera City" and Kurbelvideo's "Fight Little Island," the meaning of the term "mom movies" changed to indicate instead the frequency with which art house cinemas were filled to capacity.

Open house

Even while my business for foreign films has grown, I still consider that it requires an alternative state of mind, especially since we've been conditioned pretty much all our lives to watching Hollywood blockbusters.

I have noticed, however, that there is a growing number of people, myself included, who actively appreciate alternative cinema. Small "underground" enclaves are sprouting around the metropolis for indie film enthusiasts, some of whom I've met. To my surprise, they are from being known as old, turbocrack-ried film circles. Online film communities like PinoyMEDcom have over 7,000 members to date.

Suddenly, local film festivals seem to just get better, drawing more and more people every year. I'm pretty thrilled at the emerging lineup in the ongoing Cinemanila Film Festival, back on its ninth annual run at the Greenbelt theaters. There are the selections that I plan to catch: "Dreams" (Afghanistan), "5 Days and 7 Nights" (Libya/Italy), "Zatoichi" (Japan), "Bus 174" (Brazil) and "Bridal Shower" (Philippines). I am truly hoping that the many TBD on "Invicta" will be filled, because I think everybody should find time to watch this brilliant short and handsome winner. (Actually, no need. Ramona Diaz).

Don't get me wrong. I haven't turned into an insufferable snob who has shunned Hollywood movies forever. I'm still planning to catch Spider-Man, I'm still excited about the opening of "Mean Girls" and "Kill Bill" this month, and I have the DVDs of "School of Rock" and "50 First Dates" lined up for my next mattress-reconning. But just to like pairing up an Coca-Cola now and then for a cuppitchka, I go out of my way sometimes to watch something different for a change.

Oops! I have a couple of corrections, courtesy of some very astute readers. In the June column, "The Spy Who Loved Me," Matt Lemuria Santiago correctly pointed out that "double-X shenanigans" refer to females, not males. For the piece, "Catalan Zeus," a certain email sender named Shimo on the gave the 6 heads up that "6 Balas" (Spanish) was first released in "The Saint" soundtrack. My readers are smarter than I am.

[Questions and comments and jobs at: ...]

Some invaluable tips: 1) read up on your destination, 2) make copies of your passport and visas, 3) bring Knorr Seasoning

For whom travel tolls

Dear Man About Town,

I have just finished college and decided to take a break before I start working in my father's law firm. I am planning to go on vacation for almost two months. The problem is, I am not much of a traveler, and the farthest I have ever been outside of Metro Manila are Baguio and Cebu. This time around, I would like to go overseas. As a graduation gift, my parents gave me a little money, and I have managed to save some cash as well, so I think I can afford quite a vacation (although nothing too expensive). In your other articles, it seems to me that you have traveled quite a bit, so I was wondering if you could spare a few tips.

CONGRATULATIONS on having graduated! As for your choice of a career in law, well, nobody's perfect. Just kidding—please don't sue. But I commend you wholeheartedly for your decision to travel. There is nothing quite as rewarding as a new discovery, and nothing quite as stimulating as an introduction to a new culture, so you should definitely jump at the chance to travel — having doubled into the army for a six-month stint in Mirgati being a rare exception to the rule. Otherwise, go west, young man! Or east, or south, or north.

The following are my personal Ten Commandments of Travel culled entirely from experience. They apply whether the voyage entails a 32-hour protected plane ride to the pristine prairies of Saginaw, Sarnilao, or a bumpy bus ride to the boondocks of Sagada, Philippines. What better way to illustrate a point than by including anecdotes to emphasize each commandment? Be entertained and be warned, my son (traveler. Those stories are true.

Be Practical. A friend of mine had overestimated his dollar reserves for a month-long sojourn across Europe. By the time we reached Bankcamp (three weeks into the trip, he had little option left but to sleep on public benches or church pews. He was reminded by the fact that he made a lot of new acquaintances who had likewise run out of cash halfway through life.

When planning a trip, calculate with personal diligence how far your money is going to take you, including all the essentials—fare, accommodations, sustenance, entertainment and hotel. Include an emergency allowance for anything unplanned. If you don't have enough cash for a Mediterranean cruise, settle for something less expensive. The overall thrill is magnificent but not at all enjoyable when you have to consider stripping to get fare to finance the rest of visiting there.

Be Informed. Never go anywhere without at least a modicum of research. As information is easy enough to simply "go somewhere," such blind faith often results in disappointment or disaster. I once accepted an invitation to a mine over a weekend in central mountain town in Germany. Without prior knowledge of the area, I jumped on a plane from London and three hours later, my host was freezing in a multi-cabin that an on 14 inches of snow. And the toilet was in a little wooden shack 10 yards away from the main cabin, which meant I either had to put mittens on and brave the whole night, or risk frostbite while pacing. I chose the latter and now I only have one testicle.

Be Prepared. A female friend was once robbed in the Metro of Paris. Taken from her were cash and her passport. This is an almost guaranteed trip killer, and most travelers have no choice but to head for home immediately. But lo and behold, she had made copies of her passport and all the required visas. A few phone calls later, she remained her European vacation. Make copies of everything. Establish contacts at home and abroad before you leave. Use Travelex Cheques. Find out where all the Philippine consulates are in your host country. Bring Knorr Seasoning.

Be Observant. Museums are educational, landmarks are inspiring, and churches are … kind of cool, I guess, but don't stop there. Take in everything you can, no matter how mundane they may appear. A Dutch colleague based in Manila for two years now claims he spends Sundays in Rizal Park watching people. He has learned more about the culture of the Manileño by observing a family lounging on a grassy plot, than by visiting government institutions. One Sunday he may decide to stay home and accidentally watch "The Bourne Identity." Then he may consider returning to Holland.

Be Curious. A friend of mine (who had adamantly refused to eat anything but pepper steaks during our whole backpacking trip, finally acquiesced and agreed to order something on the menu that was not pepper steak. In the spirit of adventure, she pulled a fancy-sounding vegetable dish. It turned like fried tentacles dipped in ear wax. The moral is that it's still better to have suffered a new experience than to have never dared try for curious of everything from food to flies, from art to feeding carts. There's a small spa shop in Toulouse that specializes in really, really bizarre facials. You don't need to be curious about that.

Be Flexible. While a well-planned vacation ideally results in a great time had by all, not everything turns out according to schedule or scheme. Adopt the perspective of flexibility, accept the fact that some things could go wrong, and be prepared to adjust. While about to live in Sydney for a year, I was informed that my apartments would be very near a "shooting gallery" and would this be a problem? I said no, thinking I could probably get in some archery practice. It turned out, a "shooting gallery" is a location to hold events instead of going bad. Later, I learned to live with my new neighbors, listening to their stories, laughing at their jokes, and sharing far too far.

Be Wary. While the world is generally an accommodating place, it does take some getting used to. Different cultures, different languages, different traditions. The intelligent traveler knows how to be careful in an unfamiliar environment without letting this get in the way of discovery. In Bangkok, locals warned me about the Lady Boys, infamous transvestites who frequent international pubs and whose many tuxedo manuals to be real women. Ah well, ladies are like a box of chocolates, some of them have nuts.

Be Nice. Remember, you are a visitor and an ambassador. You represent not only yourself, but also the people of the Philippines. It takes a single instance encounter for a passive image or a stereotype to be born. A German girl I dated was personally impressed by artistes I took for granted as natural, such as opening the door for her or paying for dinner. She gushed to her friends that Filipino men were so chivalrous. She boasted to her parents that she loved Filipinos. She asked me to marry her. And Wondermen, thanks! Now she hates Filipino men.

Be Yourself. Be curious most of all here. Enjoy yourself, relax and indulge. This is your time to leave fun and reflect. Do what you want, which is not necessarily what the guidebook says you must.

Be Gracious. Travel is a privilege and a responsibility. It doesn't come cheap, and recent global developments have made it even more of a challenge to simply get up and go. Even those who can financially afford an overseas trip may find that their schedules or work responsibilities are too restrictive. If you have found the circumstances and time to travel, you are truly blessed. Be gracious upon your arrival back home, appreciative of your opportunity and aware that not everybody got to do this. Remember: Travel does not make you a better person; learning does. And if you come back to Manila with a chip on your shoulder, crowing about how many times you got lost and in how many cities, you haven't learned a thing.

Travel is a good thing, a healthy option. It doesn't need to be Africa, it could be Tagaytay. The point is to take yourself out of familiar surroundings, not to escape, but to remind us of the good, to reimburse our faith in the beautiful, and to enrich our homecomings with that much more potency. So go, my friend, bask in the freedom of an unfettered world. For soon you'll be employed, and it's all downhill from there.

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Man about town

Chuck Dy